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KOLKATA

NAMELESS RECOGNITION

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND
OTHER INDIAN LITERATURES

Edited by Swapan Chakravorty



**This pride of name plucks feathers from others to decorate its own
self ... let the day come when only thy name will play in my tongue
and I shall be accepted by all by my nameless recognition.**

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PART I
INTRODUCTORY

PREFACE

A national conference on 'The Impact of Rabindranath Tagore on Other Indian Literatures' was organized by the National Library on 20-21 January 2011 to mark the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of the poet. The present volume is a collection of the papers presented at the conference. We are grateful to Sri Jawhar Sircar, IAS, Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Culture, and to Dr T. Kumar, IAS, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Culture, for extending their generous support to the event. We are especially grateful to the speakers and delegates who attended the conference from across the country. Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, distinguished historian and Chairperson, Indian Council of Historical Research, inaugurated the deliberations, while Professor Sumatheendra Raghevendra Nadig, eminent poet and former Chairperson, National Book Trust, delivered the keynote address. We are grateful to them for permitting us to reproduce edited versions of

their addresses. Sri K.K. Banerjee, Director, Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, and Dr Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay, author and Regional Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata, were Guests of Honour at the inaugural session. We are glad that we were able to record their addresses.

Members of the library staff organized an exhibition of Tagore's works in other Indian languages at the Art Gallery next to the Bhasha Bhavan auditorium where the conference was being held. Sri A. R. Bandyopadhyay, Chairperson of the Advisory Board of the library and its former Director, kindly inaugurated the exhibition. We thank Biswa Mahamanab Chakra for contributing portraits of Tagore to the exhibition.

It would be invidious to single out members of the staff many of whom worked hard to make the two events lively and useful. The administrative and professional wings worked as a team to ensure that the library reclaimed its academic and cultural mandate. However, I recall with gratitude the efforts put in by Sri Safalya Nandi and Syed Abuzar Hashmi for co-ordinating preparations, and wish to thank Sri Ashim Mukhopadhyay for his assistance with the editorial work.

SWAPAN CHAKRAVORTY

PREAMBLE

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA

I am delighted to be here today at this conference to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, and I am especially happy that the National Library is addressing its agenda. I do feel that the National Library by organizing this conference is on its way to a place in our national life as a hub of intellectual activities and scholarly exchange. That is the true agenda of the National Library apart from the collection and preservation of books, and being a fund of knowledge. I have been coming to this library for about fifty years and can recall the first librarian we had here, B. S. Kesavan. Since those days the library has gone through various phases, and I am especially happy that I am part of a ceremony today that perhaps begins a new one. But while glad to be here with all of you, the thought that crosses my mind is that I am merely a historian and I have here a galaxy of experts in literature or creative producers of literature. What is a mere historian doing amongst you? I feel like a pigeon in the cage. All

I can do as a historian is perhaps to try and situate Rabindranath Tagore historically and in the perspective of the burgeoning literary creativity that one sees in the late nineteenth century.

Since impact as a conceptual category is also very much in use in the kind of history into which I am now, that is, the history of ideas, I could address the problematic trend in the very title of this conference. It would be useful to unpack this concept of impact, and see where it leads us. As regards the task of situating Tagore in the literature of this country in his time, I need only recall the age he was born into. Perhaps in the first 30 years of his life some of the major creators of modern literature in most Indian languages were born. Who were the younger contemporaries of Rabindranath Tagore? In Hindi, Munshi Premchand was born in 1880 when Tagore was nineteen years old, and Maithili Saran Gupt who was born six years later. In Marathi you have Hari Narayan Apte born in 1864, and Krishnaji Keshav Damle born in 1866. Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, who used Tagore as a source for his historical writings, was born in 1850. All of them, born before Tagore or at least before he reached the age of 30, were to enrich Marathi language and literature in the course of Tagore's lifetime.

Again, among Tagore's younger literary contemporaries we have in Kerala the famous poet Vallathol Narayana Menon, born in 1878 when Tagore was 18 years old. I believe he based the institution he founded, Kalamandalam, partly on Santiniketan. Oyyarthu Chandu Menon, the famous author of the first Malayalam novel *Indulekha* (1889), which many of you must have read in translation like me, was older than Tagore by fourteen years. You have the poet Ullur who was born in 1877. In Kannada, B. M. Srikanthaiah was born in 1884, the playwright T. P. Kailasam, in 1884, and the poet D. V. Gundappa in 1887, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar in 1891 and many others. My friend Professor Nadig, I am sure, will elaborate on this issue. In Tamil, the most prominent Subramanya Bharathi was born when Tagore was still 20 years old, and it was he who introduced the best of Bengali literature to

the Tamil language. He translated 'Vande Mataram' into Tamil in 1905, when it was rarely known in other parts of India. You have at the same time in Gujarati some very eminent writers, particularly, Tama Saheb Tendulkar who was born quite early in 1865. You have Muhammad Iqbal in Urdu born in 1877, and other stalwarts in the making—in Odia, Gopabandhu Das born in 1877, in Assam Lakshminath Bezbarua born in 1868, and Nilmoni Phukan born in 1880, in Punjab Bhai Vir Singh born in 1872, and Hira Singh Garg in 1889. I mention just a few names to show the trend. These were younger contemporaries, I will say, of Rabindranath Tagore, all born before Tagore reached the age of 30, when he wrote his collection of poems *Manasi*, considered to be his first mature output. Among those who passed away early in Tagore's life, you have of course many, most notably Ghalib who died in 1869 when Tagore just 8 years old, and Bharatendu Harishchandra who died in 1885, and Michael Madhusudan Datta who died in 1873. This was the generation which passed away, and the modern generation, representing people such as Munshi Premchand or Maithili Saran Gupta, stood for a new phase in Indian literature. This is the phase that you shall probably be addressing today and tomorrow at this conference.

If you look at authors abroad, there were Maurice Maeterlinck born in 1862, Rudyard Kipling born in 1865, W. B. Yeats born in 1863, Romain Rolland born in 1866, Benedetto Croce born in 1866, John Galsworthy (not so distinguished a name perhaps) in 1867, André Gide in 1869—and you could go on. These were all writers who were born within ten years of Tagore's birth. In fact, every writer I have mentioned was awarded the Nobel Prize, except Croce, who mixed his fortunes with Mussolini's. A number of the writers I have mentioned were associated with Tagore, especially Yeats who had a direct hand in editing Tagore with Rothenstein. André Gide played a role in interpreting Tagore for the French literati, and others such as Romain Rolland and Benedetto Croce took an important part in introducing Tagore to

European intellectuals during his trips to the West.

Thus you find in Tagore's time a literary environment both in India and abroad which partially explains what I must call the 'reception' of Tagore, or what you would might like to describe as his 'impact'. When we talk of the impact of Tagore, what exactly are we talking about? That is another question that crosses my mind when I look at the theme of this conference. The theme has been announced as the 'impact' of Tagore on other Indian literatures. Now, what does the term 'impact' signifies? As I have said, it would be useful to try to unpack this concept and seek what it contains. In intellectual history and cultural history, we do use the term 'impact'. But there are certain conceptual implications of the word that we might look at. One is, of course, quite important. The term 'impact' implies a kind of one-way traffic: that is, there is an impacter and someone impacted. It is a notion that does not leave much space for agency, for the subject to act on its own. In the historical literature of recent times, the denial of agency has been challenged. For instance, in the study of the impact of the West on India, it is being pointed out by many scholars that this implies a kind of denial of subjecthood, a one-way traffic that is quite unreal. This is one issue that one could perhaps look at in the course of this conference.

The second problem that comes to my mind relates to how 'impact' may be traced. What is the evidence that you need to produce to show that there has been an 'impact'. Now, in history as well as in literary studies, this may be studied in two ways. You might call one of the two ways identification of parallelism, a kind of parallel-hunting. You use the comparative method to identify similarities and list similarities of various kinds. You could have ideational similarities, that is, similarities in terms of ideas. An example in India would be the diffusion of nationalist ideas in different Indian languages and literatures. There could be other parallels. For instance, the ideas of *bhakti* literature could be found across India. *Vaishnavism* is another example. The point is, there

are these parallels which are sometimes identified as evidence of diffusion or 'impact'.

Another kind of similarity underlined in the study of 'impact' is the similarity of forms: forms of literature, such as the novel. If you look at early Indian novels such as *Indulekha* by Chandu Menon in Malayalam or *Durgesnandini* (1865) by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in Bengali, these were an 'impact' of the novel as a form. It represented the new rules for inclusion in our literature, as did such metrical experiments as the sonnet which, famously in Bengal, Michael Madhusudan Datta was the first to write. Hence, in terms of content as well as form you may locate evidence in order to argue that there has been an 'impact'.

The second kind of evidence is the harder evidence of 'impact' presented in terms of access. Such evidence of access to the impactor may be direct personal contact. Say, in Tagore's case someone like Hazariprasad Dwivedi, who spent many years in Santiniketan, had direct to the writer and his work, some of which he translated. Or there could be contact through correspondence, through acknowledged borrowing, translations and so on. So these are the two kinds of evidence that are commonly used to trace an 'impact'.

But there are certain theoretical problems here. One is that similarity is not necessarily evidence of 'impact' or diffusion. Parallels may be deceptive. Nationalist ideas in the literatures of different languages in colonial India may be shown to have had independent origins. Secondly there may be formal similarities between A and B, but these may both owe the form to some other influence. For instance, the 'impact' of English education created similar literary forms or similar ideas in literature, and these are not necessarily evidence of impact of the literature of one language on another. Formal similarities in modern Indian literatures could simply be the result of the 'impact' of English language and literature.

The point I am trying to make is that similarity is not necessarily an evidence of diffusion of a writer's influence. Therefore, one has to look at the evidence of 'impact', or at the harder evidence in terms of access to the language, to translation, to correspondence, and other evidence of access. I hope in course of these deliberations, which I shall listen to as a student, these are some of the issues which will be addressed. The issues of method implied in the term 'impact' deserve to be looked at. However, beyond all these problems of theory, of methodology, there is the consensus among informed critics and writers. At the level of research, there are these problems to be tackled. But at the macro-level there is agreement about the 'impact', influence or the diffusion of ideas and literary forms, and how that takes place in a cultural environment infused with certain ideas that may have a common source. Hence, in that sense, the term 'impact' is justified.

There are literary creations which are known to shape the sensibilities of entire peoples for more than one generation. And in that sense you have writers such as Dante in Italian, or Shakespeare in English, or Goethe in German, or Tagore in Bengali. Their 'impact' on the people of a speech community for several generations need not be subjected to the kind of examination that I have proposed. But at the level micro-level, these are the questions which would need to be addressed. These are thoughts that cropped up as I looked at the theme before us. I do look forward to the discussion which will follow this purely ceremonial session, and I hope to be with you in course of the next few days.

INTRODUCTION

SWAPAN CHAKRAVORTY

Rabindranath Tagore's impact on the literatures in other Indian languages may be said to have undergone three rough phases. The first related to those who came to know him and his writings through their association with the Brahmo reformist movement in the nineteenth century and the *swadesi* agitation against the proposed partition of Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth. The second followed the award of the Nobel prize for literature to Tagore in 1913, which fuelled translations and literary pilgrimages to Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati. The third phase was co-eval with the modernist turn in major Indian literatures, and the reassessment, if not critique, of Tagore's role in the light of *avant garde* experiments.

At the same time, one needs to keep in view the impact the literatures of other parts of India had on Rabindranath Tagore. To take a well-known instance, Tagore translated the poems of the fifteenth-century saint Kabir into English (*One Hundred Poems of*

Kabir, trans. Rabindranath Tagore, assisted by Evelyn Underhill, London: India Society, 1914). On their part, Hindi *chhayavadi* poets such as Suryakanta Tripathi (pseud. Nirala; 1896-1961), Sumitranandan Pant (1900-77) and Mahadevi Varma (1907-87) acknowledged Tagore as a major point of departure. The novelist and scholar Hazariprasad Dwivedi (1907-79) joined Rabindranath Tagore's university at Santiniketan in 1930 and was Director of its Hindi Bhavan from 1940 to 1950.

One could piece together stories of such literary intercourse in the case of most other Indian languages, as has been done, for instance, by the editors of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* published by Sahitya Akademi.¹ Take the instance of literature in the language of Assam, a contiguous state with a shared cultural history. The important periodical *Jonaki*, edited by Chandrakumar Agarwala, and later Hemchandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbarua, started life in Kolkata in 1889. *Jonaki* lent its name to the Assamese Romantic movement; and its contributors came to be known as writers of the '*Jonaki yug*' (the age of *Jonaki*). Lakshminath Bezbarua and his colleagues later brought out the flagship journal of Assamese literary modernism, *Baahi*, from Kolkata in 1909; its offices later moved to Dibrugarh and Guwahati in Assam. Lakshminath Bezbarua (1868-1938), the leading Assamese poet, novelist, playwright, satirist, essayist and journalist, lived for a stretch in Kolkata, studied at the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College), and married into the Tagore family. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was one of Bezbarua's major inspirations, the other was Rabindranath Tagore. His love of Kolkata and Bengali was never at odds with his work for the Assamese language, and he founded Asamiya Bhasaunnati Sadhini Sabha (Association for the Development of the Asamiya Language) in 1889. The influence of Rabindranath Tagore can be seen in the work of Assamese poets such as Dharmeswari Devi Baruani (1892-1960), Ratnakanta Barkakati (1897-1963), Nalinibala Devi (1898-1978), and the playwright and film-

maker Jyotiprasad Agarwala (1903-53). Others, such as the poet Nabakanta Barua (1926-2002), also spent time at Visva-Bharati.

The pattern can be seen to repeat itself in most other Indian literatures. The religious reform of the Brahmo sect and nineteenth-century nationalism shaped in Bengal cut deep into the Telugu consciousness. Numerous translations of Bengali authors were made into Telugu, especially of the works of Tagore. Of the Telugu poets inspired by him since the 1890s are Devulapalli Krishna Sastri, Vedula Satyanarayan Sastri, Rayaprolu Subba Rao, Abburi Rama Krishna Rao, Achanta Janaki Ram, Bezwada Gopala Reddy, Mallavarapu Visveswara Rao, B.V. Singaracharya, Jaggaiah, T. N. Anasuya Devi, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, Gurajada Appa Rao and Amarendra. There were a few who went on a literary pilgrimage to Santiniketan. These included Akulathi Chalamaiah, Rayaprolu Subba Rao, Abburi Rama Krishna Rao, Patabhi, Mallavarapu Visweswara Rao and Bezwada Gopala Reddy. More recent poets such as Ismail (1928-2008) have also been enthusiastic about Brahmo ideas.

If literary aspirants trekked to Kolkata and Santiniketan to meet the poet, there have been instances when the literature of a place was energized by Tagore's own visits. Tagore made at least eleven trips to the district of Darjeeling where Nepali is the major language spoken, staying mainly in Kalimpong and Mangpu. Important Nepali translations of Tagore were later made by authors such as Iswar Baral (1923-2000). Rabindranath Tagore's difficult novel *Gora* has had a competent Manipuri translation by N. Kunjamohan Singh, years after the poet had himself been inspired by the Manipuri dance form, using it for his dance-drama *Chitrangada* (1936).

Rabindranath Tagore visited Sindh in 1923. Sindhi writers were deeply enthused. Jethmal Parsram, a theosophist who had founded the Sindhi Sahitya Society in 1914, translated one of his novels into Sindhi. A literary and dramatic club named after the

poet was set up by Khanchand Daryani and Mangharam Malkani in Hyderabad (Sindh), and its first performance, translations from the poet's works, opened in the presence of the poet himself during his visit.

Tagore's friendship with eminent Indians outside Bengal was another catalyst, although not always an uncritical one. The most fruitful contact between Gujarat and Bengal followed in the wake of his friendship with Mahatma Gandhi. Among Gandhi's associates, Kaka Kelekar, a Marathi who also wrote in Gujarati, taught at Santiniketan, while Mahadev Desai, translator of the Mahatma's autobiography into English, rendered Tagore's and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's works into Gujarati. Gandhi sent some of the pupils of his school, Gujarat Vidyapith, to Santiniketan. The impact of the decision may be seen in the close links with Bengali literature in modern Gujarati writers such as Nagindas Parekh, Prahlad Parekh, Raman Soni, Pulakin Trivedi, Bachubhai Sukla and Kusandas Manek. Umasankar Joshi (1911-88), a renowned poet and novelist in Gujarati, was for a while Chancellor of Visva-Bharati (1979-82).

However, it would be an error to consider Tagore's influence in isolation: he was part of a number of reasons that drew Indians to Bengal and its literature. For instance, the influence of Tagore, the religious movement of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, and the English writings of the poet and philosopher Aurobindo Ghosh equally impelled modern Kannada writers to study the literature of Bengal. B. Venkatacharya (1845-1914) was an early translator of prose fiction from the Bengali, while Tagore influenced K. V. Puttappa (1904-94) and Sivarama Karanth (1902-97). It is said that Karanth's father stopped him from studying in Santiniketan apparently because Bengali brahmans ate fish. Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam were both influential for Maithili Romantic poets of the twentieth century, such as Vaidyanath Misra (pseud. Nagarjun and Yatri; 1911-98).

Modernist iconoclasm had often turned its back on Tagore, in Bengal as much as elsewhere in India. Odia and Bengali literatures have had a long and productive history of translation and mutual influence. Yet, although Tagore was a potent influence on the generation of Kalindicharan Panigrahi, Jibanananda Das has been a far more important source for later poets such as Guruprasad Mohanty (1924-2004) and Dipak Misra (b. 1939). Nevertheless, Tagore continues to be studied by writers and scholars in every part of the country, and this process of continuous recovery and resuscitation lends to his writings an undiminished vitality. Such interest is far from a scholarly attention given to a canonical poet. This is clear from the number of writers important in their own languages who have thought Tagore worth their while to translate. G. Sankara Kurup (1901-78), a leading poet in Malayalam, translated *Gitanjali* in 1959; Marathi lyricists such as B. R. Tambe (1874-1941) and B. B. Borkar (1910-84) emulated his poems and songs, while the Marathi writer and actor P. L. Deshpande (1918-2000) learnt Bengali in order to be able to read Tagore in the original; contemporary Rajasthani writers such as Manohar Singh Rathore and Ramswarup Kisan have done important translations; and the eminent Tamil musicologist T. S. Parthasarathi (1913-2007) alone translated seven of his plays.

That one is tempted to speak of an Indian literature rather than of 'literatures' in the plural is more an effect of Tagore's success than of the lexicon of post-colonial state bureaucracy. On 7 April 1895 Tagore delivered an address at the annual meeting of the Bengal Academy of Literature (later Bangiya Sahitya Parishat) entitled 'Bangla Jatiya Sahitya'. The paucity of a national literature, according to Tagore, is the cause of the absence of national ties:

The vital links between our past and present have been snapped because of this paucity of literature. A major reason for this paucity is the absence of national ties. In our country, Kanauj, Koshal, Kashi, and Kanchi have all gone their own separate ways; nor did they desist from destroying

one another occasionally by letting loose the horse of the ashvamedha sacrifice. The Indraprastha of the Mahabharata, the Kashmir of Rajtarangini, the Magadha of the Nandas and the Ujjayini of Vikramaditya were not joined by a running strand of national history. Hence our national literature could not establish a firm foundation on the collective heart of the nation...Kalidasa belongs only to Vikramaditya, Chandvardi to Prithviraj, Chanakya to Chandragupta. They did not belong to the entire India of their times; even within their respective regions, there are no links connecting them to earlier and later periods.²

Tagore expressed the hope that *sahitya* would unite the nation through its virtue of *sahitatva* or union, and that the Bengal Academy of Literature would lead the way. When Tagore delivered the Presidential address at the Bengali Literary Convention at Varanasi in 1923, this hope had grown into confident prophecy. The Nobel award was by then a decade old, and a chair for Bengali had already been instituted at Marburg University. Tagore claimed with barely concealed pride that this was unimaginable ten years back, and predicted similar literary glory for the rest of India:

If Bengal achieves special glory through such diligence, will it not redound to the whole of India? ... There is no harm if today's guests stream through the courtyard of Bengal. Indians will have to recognize that all these travellers are meeting on Indian ground.³

However, the national literature that Bengal's ostensible success brought to light was incontestably plural, covering the entire range from élite letters to the oral productions of indigenous peoples. One of Tagore's most precious legacies is his acknowledgement of this extraordinary diversity, and his generous understanding of the national, one which had a place for everything from the literature of minor cults to children's rhymes and rural songs. It is to be hoped that the plural 'literatures' used in the title of the conference would encourage us to celebrate this inclusive spirit.

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3. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Presidential Address at the Bengali Literary Convention of North India, 3 March 1923', trans. Swapan Chakravorty, *ibid.*, p. 319.

TAGORE'S RECEPTION IN INDIA: REFLECTIONS OF A POET

SUMATHEENDRA NADIG

I was a teacher, but am no teacher at the moment. I continue to be a student, and since we are all students, you are in a sense my colleagues. About my experience of Bengal I have written a poem called 'Banalatasree' in Kannada. That is different from Jibanananda Das's 'Banalata Sen'. For me Banalata symbolizes the whole of Bengal. In this poem there are names of most of the important Bengali poets – men and women – and Banalata Sen appears as an allusion.

I hesitate to speak on Tagore and his impact. It is better that I speak as a poet. A historian such as Professor Bhattacharya cannot go wrong on facts. But a poet is like a child and is allowed to make mistakes. I said to myself that I would go and stand before my people, and they will accept my mistakes. I am going to speak about Tagore's reception in the literatures of other Indian languages

The Director General of the National Library Professor Swapan Chakravorty has thrust the heavy responsibility to deliver

the keynote address upon me. I am not a polyglot, nor have I read Bengali literature in the original. But I can read Bengali with difficulty and with the help of a translator or a translation, I can bring the tone and attitude of the original into my own translations. I have visited Kolkata several times, and Santiniketan on a number of occasions. I have many friends who are poets, and my friends Subodh Sarkar and Mallika Sengupta have translated my verses into Bengali. I have translated and published Tagore's *Tin Sangi*, Nirendranath Chakravarti's *Ulanga Raja*, and an anthology of Bengali poems. I mention all this to say how little I know about Tagore, which makes me tremulous in addressing you. Despite my fears and hesitations about participating in this seminar, I said to myself that I will make an honest speech in my capacity as a Kannada poet. I said to myself that I will take this opportunity to pay my homage to the great national poet, who is also a world poet. I am going to share with you my love for Tagore, and for Bengal.

There was an excited reception of Tagore, I suppose, in every Indian language, because until Tagore's appearance we were reading Western literature, moulded by Christian influences. Our Himalayas had become a range of snow-clad mountains and had ceased to be *devatatma*, *nagadhiraja* and *prthivya iva manadanda*. We had become Bible-conscious and we had lost Vedic and Upanishadic consciousness. The springs of our poetry had dried up, and Tagore came to us like rain to parched earth.

We had also lost our self-esteem and pride in our motherland. We did not love our country or its people, and had become babus trying to please British sahibs. Our mother-tongues had turned into 'vernaculars' and they were not treated with the same respect shown to English. And as for our rights, we were simply begging for them.

At such a time Tagore wrote:

I try to make my countrymen see that man does not have to beg for his rights, he must create them for himself. Man lives by his inner nature and there he is his own master. To depend on gains from outside is to hurt one's true self. The denial of our political rights was indeed less grievous than the shameful burden of our prayers and petitions.

I underlined the fact that we must win over our country, not from some foreigner, but from our own inertia, our indifference.

At this dawn of the world's awakening, if our own national endeavour holds no intimations of a universal message, the poverty of our spirit will be laid piteously bare.

This is the Tagore, the self-confident, clear-headed, dignified, *rishi*-like poet who cleansed our confused minds and inspired us to be in touch with our inner reality. This Tagore we needed in the early decade of twentieth century. We needed him, we received him, we adored him, and loved him.

I think the pattern of reception varied from language to language. As far as Kannada is concerned, I am going to sketch three stages of reception. The first was the reception of socio-religious thinkers such as Debendranath Tagore, Rammohan Roy, and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. The second stage was the reception of Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Finally we had the reception of Tagore.

Between 1885 and 1915, B. Venkatacharya had translated almost all the novels of Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Venkatacharya (1845-1914) learnt Bengali directly from Iswarchandra Vidyasagar through postal tuition. The unfortunate Kannadigas have not preserved those post cards through which Iswarchandra Vidyasagar instructed Venkatacharya. Venkatacharya also translated his Bengali teacher's *Bhrantivilasa*. His translations of Bankim's *Bisha Briksha* and *Anandamath* were prescribed as text books for high school and undergraduate students. The

biography *Raja Rammohan Ray Charitre*, first written in Urdu, then translated into Telugu, was translated into Kannada by K. Ramaswamy Iyengar and published in 1915.

All this shows that Bengal's presence had been felt through the works of Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra and Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna Ashram and Brahmo Samaj prepared the ground for the reception of Bengali thinkers, their ideas and literature, much before Karnataka read Rabindranath Tagore.

II

Two of our foremost poets were influenced by Rabindranath Tagore. Kuppalli Venkatappa Gowda Puttappa (1904-1994) a great Kannada poet and Jnanapith awardee. He was a student of Mysore University when Brajendranath Seal was the Vice Chancellor. Puttappa, who later chose the pen-name Kuvempu, stayed in Mysore Ramakrishna Ashram as a student. In his twentieth year he read Tagore's prose poems. In his diary entry of 1924 he says:

I started turning the pages of *The Crescent Moon*. I read the poem 'The First Jasmines'. Its influence was so tremendous that I gazed at Tagore's photo which was on my wall. I gazed with my heart lighted with reverence. Then I came to the poem called 'The End'. My heart melted and I cried. I was immersed in *Rasanubhava*. (*Nenapina Doniyali*, p. 232.)

Kuvempu says that by the end of 1925 he tried to translate some of Tagore's poems from English (p. 503). On 12 October 1924 he wrote a sonnet in English, in which he expresses his reverence to Tagore. In this sonnet on Tagore he says:

Midst the drunken din of war thy songs
Sweet messengers of peace and harmony,
Shower of joy quell the flames of agony

And drew love's veil on homicidal wrongs!
 Thou movest midst the field proclaiming, 'Cease,
 Children of God, these weapons are for play;
 Behold our mother waits with streaming tears.'
 With light of life and harmony of peace
 Move on, great poet, for time is His way. (Ibid., p. 539)

Elsewhere Kuvempu speaks about his poem called 'Karnataka Rastrageeth'. He says that he intended it to be like Tagore's 'Jana gana mana', a national song for Karnataka. Tagore was the ideal for Kuvempu and he wanted to be the Rabindranath of Karnataka. (Ibid., p. 545)

In his diary note on 11 August 1925, Kuvempu writes:

I went to give a speech on 'Nature's Beauty' in Karnataka Sangha and my Professor B. Krishnappa greeted me saying, 'The budding poet Rabindranath Tagore is coming.' The classroom was filled with applause. I felt very shy. I felt I was sinking. But I said to myself that great poet's energy is blazing in me also. But it is dangerous to be called by that name. And in my mind, I bowed before the divine mother and the poet, to make me worthy of such a name. (Ibid., pp. 556-7).

Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre (1896-1981), another Jnanapith awardee who is considered to be a poet's poet, came under the influence of Rabindranath Tagore when he was an undergraduate at Fergusson College, Pune. His friend Sridhar Khanokar had the book Tagore's *Sadhana* and Bendre read it avidly, and started considering Tagore as his guru. Some of the ideas in *Sadhana* inspired Bendre to write poems such as 'Dinada Haadu', 'Taresha Jafasur', and 'Abhiruchi'

About Tagore, whom he praised in such poems as 'Gurudeva', Bendre writes:

Individual and society nourish each other; they are

complementary and if their relation doesn't grow toward the discovery of the highest truth, life gets distorted. The first writer who brought this awareness to me is Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's children's poems, love poems, short stories, the old men in his plays and the dialogue style of his articles have educated me in many ways. His children's poems awakened in me the awareness of my mother. Translating his poems to my students in the classroom and muttering to myself Tagore's saying was a play I indulged in for a few days. I read the poems of *Crescent Moon* to my mother. I lectured about Tagore's songs to large audiences. Reading his stories I became adept in dealing with various rasas. 'Kabuliwala', 'The Post Master', 'Baboos of Nayanjore' – what stories are they! Under the shadows of trees, by the side of hills, on bullock carts, on the banks of rivulets, wherever I was, those stories gave me great pleasure in reading them aloud. I read his stories to young children and the essays to myself. All this I did more to get into Samadhi contemplating the uniqueness of the spiritual seeker Tagore than to worship his poetry.

Tagore's *The Crescent Moon* inspired Bendre to write twenty five poems called *Karulina Vachanagalu* (Utterances of Affection). These are a variety of prose-poems, like musical phrases that remind us of the *vachanas* of twelfth-century Kannada *veerasaiva* devotional poets. In these poems there are resonances of sixteenth-century Kannada devotional songs as well. Bendre does not borrow his images from Tagore, but receives only hints, and lets his imagination shape the metaphor.

III

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar (1891-1986), another Jnanapith awardee, who has written short stories, plays, poetry, novels,

criticism, commentaries on the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and who edited the magazine *Jeevana*, met Tagore in Santiniketan. He wrote a book on the life and works of Tagore. Masti Venkatesh Iyengar raises the question of Tagore's place in literature. 'Is he equal to Shakespeare, Goethe and Kalidasa? Such questions should not be asked.' He says:

In the world of literature there are no thrones. Among the achievers, no one is small. From one angle, Tagore is not their equal; from another, he is their equal. One's broad vision, another's range of emotions, and another's perfect handling of the rasas are not here. One's dramatic sense, another's criticism of life and another's poetic flow are not to be found in Tagore ... Whatever seems to be deficient, Tagore's strength as a poet ... have qualified him to sit by their side. Before Tagore there was no poetry which had touched the hearts of various linguistic groups. Those who stand before such poetry ... must realize that they are not standing before a statue in a gallery ... They should not forget that they are standing before the consecrated image of the deity in the inner sanctum. Feeling joy in its presence is laudable; taking out the measuring rod is impudence.

That was how the large-hearted great writer Masti Venkatesha Iyengar received Rabindranath Tagore.

In 1882, when Rabindranath Tagore was twenty one, he went to Karwar where his elder brother Satyendranath was a judge. Tagore was struck by the beauty of its landscape. There he wrote the play *Prakritir Pratisodh*. In 1919, during his tour of south India, Tagore went to Mysore and Bangalore. While he was in Bangalore, he completed his novel *Sesher Kabita*. People of Karnataka are proud to remember that it was while enjoying their hospitality that Tagore completed a play and a novel. There is a popular belief that an admirer of Tagore sent to Santiniketan the cot on which Tagore had slept in Karwar.

In 1919, while passing through Dharwar for 15 minutes, the train was delayed and Tagore spent the time talking to the then young poet Bendre at a spot still marked for visitors. On reaching Bangalore, Tagore stayed at the famous bungalow called Balabroui, and there is a plaque on the wall in memory of the event. One of the lively theatrical centres of Bangalore is called Ravindra Kalakshetra.

I have spoken so far mainly about the various responses to Tagore in Karnataka. For lack of time I will briefly mention only a few highlights of his reception in other languages. Urdu has seven translations of *Gitanjali*, and the earliest, *Arz-e-naghma* by Niyaz Fatehpuri, was published in 1914. In Sindhi, the poet Bevas was a great admirer of Tagore. One of Sindhi's drama societies was called Rabindranath Literature and Dramatic Club. Asamiya had close connections with Bengal, but there are translations of Tagore only after 1951. The great Hindi poet Nirala spent his early life in Bengal. It is recorded, that he used read Tagore's poems to his young wife. He wrote a book on Tagore called *Ravindra Kavita Kanon*. He had a poet's quarrel with Tagore. All along there was no reconciliation between his divided imagination, between the Tagore and the Nirala in his heart. When he was at the height of his popularity, his mind was in great turbulence. In that disturbed state, it seems he wrote that *Gitanjali* was an immature book. Another statement attributed to him claims that he was not Nirala, but a warrior who had defeated Tagore in battle.

Hindi has the greatest number of books related to Tagore. There are nearly forty books on the life and works of Tagore, and nearly 350 translations. Behind the proliferation of Tagoreana in Hindi, there is government patronage to Hindi writers and publishers. This shows the discrepancy between genuine reception and market-oriented reception.

Tagore influenced Kerala not only as a writer but also as an educationist, an artist and a thinker. G. Sankara Kurup compares

himself in a poem to the sunflower (suryakanti) flower and Tagore to the sun. Gopala Pillai translated *Gitanjali* into Sanskrit. The book on Tagore written by Masti Ventakesh Iyengar has been translated into Malayalam.

Maharashtra, like Bengal and Kerala, is one of the most culturally vibrant states. I have heard that poets such as B. R. Tambe and B. B. Borkar have translated Tagore. Another translation by Ruguedi is called *Abhanga-Gitanjali* (1921). The title suggests that *abhanga* metre is used in this translation. In Gujarati, Ramanlal Soni has translated nearly twenty books of Tagore including the short plays in *Hasyakautuk* and *Byangyakautuk*. One of the books in Gujarati on Tagore is called *Kalidasa ane Rabindranath*. In Tamil, the great poet Subramanya Bharathi has translated eight stories of Tagore. It seems this nationalist learnt Bengali when he escaped to the Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry.

Excuse me for this shoddy treatment of the reception of Tagore for lack of time. I am sure you are waiting to hear from scholars, who will give you a better and more accurate picture of Tagore's reception in other Indian languages. As they crush the sugarcane that Tagore is, I hope you will be rewarded. I hope this national seminar will instil in us a curiosity to study the roots, boughs and branches of the great banyan called Tagore.

Thinking about the reception of Tagore, it is obvious to me that we have not received him well. Out of the nearly 150 books he published, no Indian language has translated even thirty per cent. Besides our mother tongue and English, we hardly know the writers in other languages. For this, especially our teaching community is to be blamed, including me. Now is the time to make up for this. We must recognize Tagore, the epitome of the Indian writer, who knew the soul of India. Let this symposium lead us to a perceptive study of Tagoreana. Tagore will reveal to us the mystery that is India. The mother India he discovered will not be found in the Boston Brahmins, in Yeats, in Eliot, in Whitman, or even in

Oriental studies.

Most of us persist in our second-hand Western ways of thinking. Tagore studies might show us an Indian way. Tagore's idea of nationalism is not exclusive; it is inclusive of all mankind. *Bharatamata* meant to him the mother who should be worshipped. *Bharata* meant to him all strata of society including the poor who were illiterate, squalid and ignorant, who were oppressed and exploited. He wanted all Indian to feel that they were equal, whether they were Muslims or Christians or *dalits* or women. Tagore's approach to Islam was different from that of Gandhi. Tagore does not preach, but thinks aloud and encourages us to think.

In a way Tagore might appear not so relevant to our present-day Western style of living and thinking. But he is meaningful to our inner life, which is buried under the hard shell of our money-minded, mean, selfish, power-mongering, corrupt individualism that does not allow fellow feeling, sharing, sympathy and love of communal good. Tagore is there: we must receive him because he makes us think and feel about *swades* and about the soul of India which may be called *Bharatamata*. Tagore remains a loving guru who continues to enrich us with nourishing thoughts and seminal feelings, and to light up our imagination.

TAGORE'S LEGACY: IMPACT AS RELEVANCE

K. K. BANERJEE

Tagore emerged as a major source of inspiration in Indian creative writing in the early twentieth century. He had been a recognized presence in the Bengali literary scene since the late nineteenth century, but few outside Bengal knew him until he won the Nobel prize in 1913. Tagore grew in stature in the following decades, as readers belonging to other language communities gradually became aware of the variety and range of his works, and as his own creative experiments continued to dazzle and surprise even his admirers in Bengal. However, nothing that followed could recapture the excitement of the initial discovery of an Indian poet already feted in the West. The story of the Indian response would eventually become more complicated, as readers engaged with his writings in a less adulatory spirit. But in general, Indian reception remained generous and, more crucially, relevant.

What is particularly curious is the fact that Tagore was greeted with warmth by Indians of contradictory political and religious

convictions. Sisir Kumar Das, in his *History of Indian Literature*, mentions two such instances. The political activist Savarkar, though distant from Tagore in his ideological bent, wrote a poem on him while in prison. On the other hand, Kumaran Asan, the poet who wrote in Malayalam, composed a poem in Sanskrit, entitled *Swagata Panchakam*, perhaps so that Indians would appreciate sooner his reverence for the Bengali writer:

By your magic words you have enthralled
Men of taste in the East and the West!
Lo behold! The bard of *Gitanjali* comes!
Our eyes have won their best reward
As Ravi arrives with his comrade Sarat.

The success of *Gitanjali* published in 1912 was not the only reason that drew others to Tagore. Tagore's school in Santiniketan attracted visitors and scholars from across India and the world, and a few political leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru. Students drawn from different parts of the country would become the poet's most reliable emissaries. Some of them would go on to write on the poet and translate him – Krishna Kumar Kashyap, P. B. Naregal, Narayan Sangam in Kannada, B. Gopala Reddy, A. Chalamiah and M. Visweswaran Rao in Telugu and Nagindas Parekh in Gujarati.

It is well known that Tagore catalysed the modernist impulse in many of the Indian literatures since the 1920s. The instance often cited is that of his influence on the Hindi *chhayavadis* such as Sumitranandan Pant, Nirala and Mahadevi Verma. Alternatively, one might think of the mystic strain in the Asamiya poetry of Dharmeswari Devi Baruani, Ratnakanta Barkakati and Nalinibala Devi.

Tagore reached the southern part of the peninsula even before some of his best works were written or his best musical pieces composed. *Gitanjali* was translated into Telugu as early as 1914, and the Tamil great Subramanya Bharathi wrote a tribute in *Swadesamitran* on 25 August 1921. Tagore's relationship with Tamil

literature has endured. V. R. M. Chettiar, the eminent Tamil poet, translated *Gitanjali* in 1945, and the more recent writer Puviyarasu made a new translation in 2003. Both poets would go on to render into Tamil other works by Tagore, while P. Thooran has shown traces of Tagore's influence in his musical compositions. In Malayalam literature, Tagore was a major source in the formation of the creative sensibilities of the poet G. Sankara Kurup (who translated *Gitanjali*) and the novelist C. V. Raman Pillai.

It is easy to discern from such examples and from this distance in time that Tagore's influence on other Indian literatures has been one that leaned toward Romantic subjectivity. It is also evident that the Tagore *persona* was the creation of a defeated culture that needed to invent a sage who could represent its lost legacy. But what are less easy to appreciate are the reasons that have sustained Tagore's relevance to our literatures and our nation. I hope this conference will look at this mystery of a poet still vigilant, caring for his people like 'the great sentinel' as Gandhi called him, rather than one who is offered the token reverence due to a *Gurudev* from the past.

THE GIFT

RAMKUMAR MUKHOPADHYAY

In an article published in Jyaishta 1333 (1926) in the magazine *Bharati*, Rabindranath Tagore wrote about a female mendicant who asked him for a plot of land to build a hut. She built it in one part of the plot, and the rest she used to grow paddy and vegetables for her and some orphans. Her mother was well off and wanted to support her, but she refused. The mendicant explained to Tagore:

To eat at home breeds a kind of self- complacency. The mind cannot escape the illusion that I am the owner of this rice and I am feeding myself. But when I beg from door to door, the rice belongs to God. He gives it through the hands of men. I have no claim over this rice. I have to depend on his kindness.

In the next paragraph Tagore wrote that, 'The love and honour that he received from Bengal was more than what one had got in the preceding 55 years.' But he added that what he got from the rest of the country and abroad was a divine gift on which he had no claims. Tagore added that there was no reason why God and

people from other language communities were so kind to him.

Tagore's reception in other Indian languages was multi-layered. Many students came to Santiniketan from different parts of the country. They included Nabakanta Baruah from Assam, Binodini Devi from Manipur, Indira Gandhi from Delhi, Krishnalal Sridharani and Pallav Parui from Gujarat, to mention a few. Many scholars came as teachers, also as Kesavdev Kalika from Maharashtra, Hazariprasad Dwivedi from Varanasi, Rajkumar Buddhimanta Singh from Tripura, and others. Even social reformers and educators came to Santiniketan as guests. Tagore also went to different parts of the country and inspired writers. Rabindranath Tagore's interest in the Tamil scholar Mahamaya Samina Pair, his love for Kabir, Tulsidas, and Surdas, his admiration for Lakshmikanta Bezabarua's writings are only a few examples.

On the other hand, he was a great inspiration to many writers in so many languages of this country. For example, the Romantic Movement in Urdu of which Syed Sajjad Haider Yelduram and Majnun Gorakhpuri were representatives drew their inspiration from Tagore. Neyaz Fatehpuri, Premchand, and their contemporaries also expressed their indebtedness to him. His influence on the *chhayavadi* poets in Hindi literature is well documented. To quote Hazariprasad Dwivedi:

The influence of Rabindranath has been more pronounced in the realm of poetry than in any other branch of Hindi literature. The mystic element in *Gitanjali* kindled the imagination of young and sprouting generation of Hindi poets who began to immolate it consciously or unconsciously. This new type of was known as *chhayavad*.

The poetry of Nirala, Mahadevi Verma, Maithali Saran Gupt, Mukuldhhar Pande and some other poets echoed Tagore in various ways. Madhdev Manuj translated some parts of Madhusudan's *Birangana* and Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala* into Marathi. He himself wrote many significant original poems in Marathi. Both his

form and feeling have resemblances with Tagore. Narain Murlidhar Gupta, another significant Marathi poet, also drew his inspiration from Tagore, particularly from the mystic side of his verse. The Thakur family had a *zamindari* in Pandua in Odisha. Rabindranath Tagore planned and composed many poems in Odisha. In one of visits to Cuttack, he met Madhusudan Rao, one of the foremost modern Odia poets. The relationship grew close. At the invitation of Tagore, Madhusudan visited Santiniketan. Like Tagore, Madhusudan, led a simple life and was influenced by Tagore's religious songs. Madhusudan's Brahmo Sangit, some scholars believe, has linguistic proximity with Tagore's songs and poems. The *sabuja* movement in Odia literature led by Annadasankar Ray, Kalindicharan Panigrahi and Baikuntha Pattanaik also drew inspiration from Tagore. Mayadhar Mansingha, a well-known Odia writer, thought the *sabuja* group drunk with the wine of Tagore's writings. A number of Malayalam poets were also inspired by Tagore. He prompted Sanjayan to write a mock poem entitled *Hansanjali*. The doyen of Malayalam poetry, G. Sankara Kurup, not only translated Rabindranath Tagore directly from Bengali but also imbibed certain elements of Tagore's verse into his own.

About translations of Tagore into other Indian languages, and about books on him by authors and critics from across the country some studies and bibliographies have already been published. I do not wish to discuss those here. Instead, I would like to share with you an anecdote. I met a Manipuri translator of *Gitanjali* who was also its publisher. I asked him why he translated and published the book while six other translators had preceded him in Manipuri. He was a *vaishnav*, with a *rasakali* painted on his forehead and nose. He said in a very low voice, in the mild manner of a *vaishnav* devotee, that his translation was his own way of reaching Tagore.

In his article in *Bharati*, Tagore had said that he did not know why people from other languages were kind to him. But people such as the Manipuri translator, Raghvani Sarma, knew the reason well. We in our own way are trying to reach Tagore for various

reasons – some social, even political. After the mass-killings that followed Godhra, authors of different parts of India decided to translate *Gora* into twenty Indian languages. When atrocities rock the country, Tagore's poem 'Beerpurush' and play *Raktakarabi* are staged in different parts of India, including the north-eastern states. Tagore remains a part of Indian existence and creativity. He does not save us when we land ourselves in trouble, but he still helps us confront the crisis without fear.

PART II

THE LEGACY OF
SANSKRIT

SANSKRIT LITERATURE AND RABINDRANATH

REETA BHATTACHARYA

Rabindranath Tagore is known to all of us as one of India's greatest poets as well as a poet of world renown. The designation, however, is inadequate. His creative urge was driven toward the stupendous cultural heritage of India, joining the ancient period to the modern. Tagore revered ancient Indian traditions and Sanskrit literature. Tagore thoughts and life were influenced by Kalidasa as well as by Vedic and Upanishadic concepts.

The silent footsteps of India's past can be heard in such poems as the opening untitled piece in the anthology *Katha*¹. More generally, his respect for ancient Indian way of life is reflected in the poems of *Kalpana*, *Chaitali*, *Katha o Kahini* and *Naibedya*. Some of these may even be taken as analytical exegesis exploring the cardinal features of ancient India. We clearly find his esteem for the mystic elegance of pacific life in ancient India in such poems as 'Ekal o Sekal', 'Meghdut', 'Baishnab Kabita', 'Premer Abhishek',

'Abedan', 'Bijayini', and 'Bhasha o Chhanda'. Plays and dance dramas such as *Balmiki Pratibha*, *Chitrangada*, *Biday Abhisap*, *Narakbas*, *Gandharir Abedan*, *Karna-Kunti Sambad*, *Malini*, *Raja*, *Sapmochan*, and *Natir Puja* centre on ancient Indian history. He unveiled the essence of what he saw as the Indian spirit in these works.

But a more integrated approach is evident in the essays in *Prachin Sahitya*. The Upanishads, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the lyrical compositions of Kalidasa, played an instrumental role in enabling Rabindranath to realize the core of Indian cultural beliefs. Moreover, the influence of the many streams of Indian philosophy and Sanskrit literature, such as *Smriti*, *Tantra*, and *Vedanta* were fused in his thinking. Rabindranath was thoroughly influenced by the Sanskrit language and its literature from his childhood. On the one hand, he was steeped in the *Veda-Purana-Itihasa* and the literary forms such as epic, poetry, and drama. On the other hand, his work touched upon *dharmasastra*, *alamkarasastra* and *darsansastra*. Those who were associated with the formative period of Rabindranath's career were aware of the impact of Sanskrit literature on his work. Rabindranath and his brothers, Dwijendranath, Satyendranath and Jyoyirindranath, were learned in Sanskrit literature, thanks to the early influence of their father Debendranath Tagore.

Before his *upanayana* (the practice followed by the Brahmins of adopting the sacred thread), Rabindranath had the good fortune of interacting with Becharam Chattopadhyay, a Sanskrit scholar, a Brahmo preacher and his father's friend. He used to teach Rabindranath recitation of hymns from the book *Brahmadharma*. His teaching was methodical and under his guidance, Rabindranath was groomed into reciting the hymns. Rabindranath recalled in *Jibansmriti*:

After achieving the status of a Brahmin I felt an insatiable urge to rattle off the *Gayatri* hymn. I distinctly remembered

that, on the basis of the portion *bhu-r-bhuvah-svah*, I used to make all possible effort to expand my mind in the pursuit of infinity.²

Under the influence of Debendranath Tagore, there emerged a milieu within the premises of Thakurbari, which favoured the ideological sobriety of the Upanishads as desired by Debendranath's version of Brahmo rituals. Later Rabindranath was to recall:

The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship; and he has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world, or allowing his keen interest in all human affairs to suffer any abatement.³

The philosophy of the Upanishads was reflected in Tagore's behaviour, culture and expression. His respect towards the seers of ancient India was reflected in the 79th poem from *Naibedya*:

*Tomare bolechhe jara putra hote priya,
Bitta hote priyatara, ja-kichhu atmiya
Sab hate priyatama nikhila bhubane,
Atmar anataratara, tader charane
Patiya rakhite chai hriday amar.*

These lines indicate that he had gravitated towards the concept of *amritatattva*, embodied in the *Brihadaranayaka Upanishad* where the sage Yajnavalkya advised Maitreyee: *Tadetat preyah putrat preyah bittat preyah*. It is the ideology that animated the *asram* at Santiniketan, where Rabindranath himself used to lead the morning prayers.

A part of the creative life of Rabindranath was devoted to the study of ancient Indian literature. Up to 1911, his views on the Upanishads were reflected in *Oupanishad Brahma*, *Atmasakti*, *Swades*, *Bharatbarsha*, *Kheya*, *Sahitya*, *Adhunik Sahitya*, *Sarodatsab*, *Santiniketan*, *Gitanjali*, and many songs. He

published the collection of verse *Naibedya* in the year 1901. *Gora* was written in 1909-10, where the character Pares was developed after the ancient seers who realised the ultimate truth or *brahman*. Rabindranath has translated various hymns from the Upanishads and certain hymns of the Vedas. These include: *Aayaa hi mantra*, *Asi hi birah*, *Ganaanaam tvaa ganapatim habaamahe*.

The intimate relationship of Rabindranath with the Upanishads is clearly discernable. Apart from direct translations, we find the shadow of the Upanishads pervading Rabindranath's creative world. The creative emotions of the Vedic poet and that of Rabindranath were tuned to a similar rhythm. Granted, the poets belong to epochs separated by centuries. But Rabindranath felt the need to transform a banal story from the *Chhandogya Upanishad* (4.4) into a heart-wrenching poem. This is the poem 'Brahman' in *Katha*:

'... *Bahuparicharja kari peyechhinu tore,*
Janmechis bhartriheena Jabalar krode--
Gotra taba nahi jani.'
'... *Abrahman naha tumi tata.*
Tumi dwijotamma, tumi satyakulajata.'

Although the poem apparently seems to be a bit translation oriented, it still is a literary triumph. According to the Upanishads, individualized identity is elevated beyond corporeality, into the realm of undivided all-pervasive divinity, under the influence of universal consciousness. Hence Rabindranath wrote:

If we really believe this, then we must uphold an ideal life in which everything else,—the display of individual power, the might of nations,—must be counted as subordinate and the soul of man must triumph and liberate itself from the bond of personality which keeps it in an ever revolving circle of limitation.⁴

The Upanishads facilitated the transcending of the poet's human consciousness to the divine, and Rabindranath was

transformed from a creative poet to a person many believed to be a revered hermit. Diverging from Sankaracharya's philosophy, Rabindranath has expounded the *so'hom* (I am He) differently: I am identical to him who is superior to me.⁵

His spiritual journey was guided by the Upanishads, the traditional Hindu spiritual texts to which he had the opportunity of early exposure, being part of an upper-class Brahmo family. The Upanishads, derived in turn from the Vedas, speak of the immanent *brahman*, the supreme reality which differs from Western religious conceptions of God in that it is an all-suffusing force that transcends personality and any description. The Vedantic idea is that all things in the cosmos, even the famous Hindu deities, are only temporal manifestations of *brahman*. The Hindu trinity being Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—*satchidananda*—Rabindranath Tagore wrote in a universalist strain about man's relation to *brahman*, and the experiences that lead through the trinity to establishing ultimate identity with *brahman*. A book representative of his personal views on the Upanishads is *Sadhana*, a Hindu term for the spiritual 'mode of living or practice'.

Rabindranath was intensely impressed by the rhythmic verses of the Upanishads, which he incorporated with grace into his Bengali poems, such as 'Jay-parajay'. This may also be said of the English version of *Gitanjali*.⁶

Tagore's poetry stems from his love of nature, and commitment to a universalist philosophy which seeks God through commitment to humanity. Influenced by the Upanishads he wrote: 'Love is an endless mystery, / for it has nothing else to explain it.'⁷ According to Rabindranath, Upanishad is the dense forest of supreme knowledge (i.e. *brahmajnana*). It is not only embellished by the offshoots of achievement, but also epitomizes the stringency of asceticism. In his essay 'Sahitya',⁸ he has explicated the significant hymn of the Upanishads *satyam jnanam anantam*, in an unprecedented manner. According to him, the *brahmasvarupa* of

the Upanishads corresponds to the three different manifestations of the human soul: 'I know' i.e. *satya-svarupa* or the all-pervading existence of *Brahman*; 'I know', i.e. the consciousness of the human soul, *jnana-swarupa* or the omniscient cognition of ultimate reality; and 'I express', i.e. the manifestation of the human soul. These are the ingredients of the eternal truth or *brahman*. 'When the voice of the Silent touches my words / I know him and therefore know myself,' wrote Rabindranath.⁹ As a believer of ethereal ecstasy, Rabindranath subscribed to *anandavad*, which sought truth through joy. The Upanishad says that from *ananda*, i.e. the inner spirit of endless Bliss, have come all things, and by it they are maintained. Therefore, in spite of contradictions, we have our joy in life; we experience happiness that has ultimate value. Rabindranath liked to perceive the reflection of the blissful solicitous *brahman* in each and every entity of the universe. In this context we might recall the song 'Anandadhara bahichhe bhubane'. Rabindranath also invites others in the universal festival of ethereal solace that according to him is perpetuating itself in a continuous and seamless pattern. This seems to be the burden of the song 'Jagate anandajajne tomar nimantran'. Despite the recurrence of misfortunes, he maintained an impregnable composure. His faith in the joyous of *brahman* has much to this endurance. In poem 30 of *Naibedya*, he writes:

*Je kichhu ananda achhe drishye gandhe gane
Tomar ananda rabe tari majhkhane.*

For Rabindranath Tagore the presence of divinity is evident in the sky full of stars, 'Akas bhara surjo tara', as it is in life on earth, 'Biswa bhara pran'. The bond of love joining human beings is the manifestation of the merging of the microcosmic soul (*atma*) with the macrocosmic (*brahman* or *paramatma*). To him, 'The significance which is in unity is an eternal wonder.'¹⁰ This seems to be the point of the song:

Biswa sathe joge jethay biharo

Seikhane jog tomar sathe amaro.

The song praises the essential unity of the world with the conscious human soul, the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit, whose power creates the earth, the sky, and the stars, and at the same time irradiates our minds.

Rabindranath's intellect and emotions were entwined with what he understood as the structure of thought and feeling of ancient India. This contributed towards his enthusiasm for the Sanskrit language. He believed that Sanskrit had played an instrumental role in fostering the functional and sophisticated features of the Bengali language, filling its deficiencies and renewing its energies. After founding the Brahmacharyasram at Santiniketan in 1901, he adopted the responsibility of editing two school-books—*Ingraji Sopan* (steps to English) and *Sanskrita Prabes* (gateway to Sanskrit). In the editorial remarks of *Sanskrita Prabes* he said that he realized the need for a suitable text-book when the need for teaching Sanskrit arose in Santiniketan, driving him to guide the work himself.¹¹

Rabindranath took the initiative of commencing the *ritu-utsab* or season-centric festivals and *briksharopan* or planting of saplings at Santiniketan. It is possible that he drew inspiration from Kalidasa. In two of his plays, *Abhijnam Sakuntalam* and *Kumarasambhavam*, Kalidasa stressed the integral association between natural seasons and the cycles of human life. The spirit of *briksharopan* and the poems of the collection *Banabani* reflect the profound influence of Kalidasa upon Rabindranath. No wonder that in the poem 'Sekal' he should crave to return to the era of Kalidasa and to the navaratna sabha, the nine gems of Vikramaditya's court.¹²

Rabindranath was introduced to Kalidasa in the formative years of his life. He read *Sakuntalam* under the supervision of Ramsarbasva Bhattacharya, the Head Pandit of Metropolitan Institution.¹³ In his memoirs *Jibansmriti*, Rabindranath recalls

the memories of reading *Kumarasambhavam*. He writes that his teacher Jnanachandra Bhattacharya was barely able to confine him within the labyrinth of the formal curriculum. As a ploy to attract Rabindranath to books, Jnanchandra used to read out the translated version of *Kumarasambhavam*.¹⁴ The theme exerted a profound influence upon him and the lyrics were emblazoned in his memory.

There is a striking resemblance between these two marvels of Indian literature. Kalidasa valued renunciation and asceticism, a cardinal value in Indian philosophy and, one may say, a key element in the Indian psyche. Rabindranath also stressed renunciation and the abjuration of greed. Both shared the faith in attributes that are silent, intangible, and noble, and believed that these are destined to triumph. Rabindranath was an ardent admirer of the true love depicted in Kalidasa. After analysing *Kumarasambhavam*, Rabindranath conclude that Uma's love for Mahadeva was impeccable and stainless. According to him, *Kumarasambhavam* shows that pristine love is eternal and destined to prevail. On the contrary, lust is ephemeral and is bound to dissipate with time. Here we may quote his poem 'Unending Love' to understand his view more clearly:

I seem to have loved you in numberless forms, numberless times...

In life, after life, age after age, forever.

My spellbound heart has made and remade the necklace of songs,

That you take as a gift, wear round your neck in your many forms,

In life after life, age after age, forever.

Whenever I hear old chronicles of love, its age old pain,

It's the ancient tale of being apart or together.

As I stare on and on into the past, in the end you emerge,

Clad in the light of a pole-star, piercing the darkness of time:

You become an image of what is remembered forever.
 You and I have floated here on the stream that brings from
 the fount.
 At the heart of time, love of one for another.
 We have played alongside millions of lovers, shared in the
 same
 Shy sweetness of meeting, the same distressful tears of
 farewell—
 Old love, but in shapes that renew and renew forever.¹⁵

Rabindranath was not orthodox or conservative. He has critically marked the evolution of world literature. At the same time, he justified Kalidasa's legacy to the modernist intelligentsia of his times. Some tangible instances of Rabindranath's debt to Kalidasa may be cited at this point.

1. Poems from *Chaitali* which has pieces on Kalidasa such as 'Kalidaser Prati', 'Ritusamhar', 'Meghadut' and 'Kumarasambhavan'. *Chaitali* is the best instance of Rabindranath's interest in Kalidasa.

2. A few other poems such as 'Meghadut' (*Manasi*), 'Sekal' (*Kshanika*), 'Bichchhed' (*Punascha*), and 'Yaksha' (*Sesh Saptak: Samjojan*).

3. The essays 'Meghadut', 'Kumarsambhab o Sakuntala', 'Sakuntala' and other pieces in *Prachin Sahitya*.

4. Expositions in many English and Bengali articles and letters.

The two fundamental dispositions of Sanskrit literature and language, i.e., prosodic vibrancy and musical harmony are evident in Kalidasa's work. Rabindranath was deeply influenced by these attributes. As Atulchandra Gupta remarks, 'They stirred his kindred genius and led him to create from the same poetic mood which led Kalidasa to compose his poems.'¹⁶ In the 'Meghadut' poems in the collections *Manasi* and *Chaitali*, the brilliance of visual imagery and rhythmic vivacity stand out. In the poems of *Punanscha*, *Sesh Saptak* and *Lipika*, Rabindranath has repeatedly

broached and analysed the quintessential aspects of Meghadut. Although in *Sonar Tari* and *Balaka*, there is no direct reference to *Meghadutam*, but the depiction of the distress of separated souls of lovers may be deemed as a spilling over of the emotions stirred by Kalidasa's poem, which seemed to have remained at the fulcrum of Rabindranath's creative world. The despondency associated with separation was for Rabindranath one of the rudimentary components of the creation.

Rabindranath and the *Ramayana*

Rabindranath continued to carry out ingenious experiments with the contents of the two central Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Irrespective of the composers Vyasa and Valmiki, the epics are fundamental to the mental make-up of nearly every Indian.¹⁷

In the *Ramayana* the central character Rama was the point of cardinal attraction for him. He used to read the *Ramayana* in its Bengali version from his boyhood, and wrote a critique of Michael Madhusudan Datta's *Meghnadbadh Kavya* when he was barely sixteen.¹⁸ He realized that Valmiki had skilfully fused excellent attributes in Rama. In Rabindranath's eyes, Rama became the paragon of tenderness and valour, the symbol of kindness and rock-solid patience, of supreme justice and unstinted empathy. This adolescent admiration for Rama stayed with him. A few years before writing the introduction of *Ramayani Katha*, he composed the poem 'Bhasha o Chhanda'. Here too he stressed that the *Ramayana* was nothing but the illustration of the human virtues. In the letters of *Javajatrir Patra* written in 1927, Rabindranath described the two epics as portrayals of the historical aspects of our country as well as its cultural heritage. Three years before that, he had written in the preamble to the first edition of *Raktakarabi* that Rama was the epitome of ethereal peace and concord whereas Ravana was the symbol of unrest and disorder. Rama stood for agrarian community whereas Ravana represented the pretentious

and pompous civilization of the city. The dissonance is touched upon in the poem 'Ahalyar Prati' of *Manasi*. Rabindranath glorifies the resurrection of the vibrancy of life within the inert and petrified Ahalya. In the essay 'Halakarshan' of *Palli Prakriti*, Rabindranath has explained the features that mark the distinction between the Aryan community and non-Aryan urbanized culture.

According to Rabindranath, the *Ramayana* is a picturesque portrayal of Indian family life. In the essay 'Kabyer Upekshita' in *Prachin Sahitya*, he drew attention to Urmila (wife of Lakshmana), Mandavi (wife of Bharata) and Srutakirti (wife of Shatrughna) as victims of sheer negligence. Urmila, he thought, was the most uncared for character in the whole of Sanskrit literature.¹⁹

One might summarize some of the other instances of the influence the *Ramayana* exerted upon Rabindranath. He was so impressed with the second *sloka* of the 'Adikanda' of the *Ramayana*, that it earned a place in the dance-drama *Balmiki Pratibha*. In the essay on the tapovana model of learning in *Siksha*, Rabindranath cited a few *slokas* of the 'Ayodhyakanda' of the *Ramayana*. In *Kal-Mrigaya* too he has quoted the *slokas* from Valmiki. In the 'Apurba Ramayana' episode of *Panchabhuta*, he combined incidents of 'Uttarakanda' with those of other kandas. In other essays such as 'Bharatbarshe Itihashe Dhara' (*Parichay*), 'Sahityasrishti' (*Sahitya*), and 'Samasya' (*Raja Praja*), Rabindranath drew historical inferences from various sections of the *Ramayana*. The motif of the golden deer is recalled in 'Nagarsangit' in *Chitra*, and in the song *Tora je ja bolis bhai amar sonar harin chai*. The latter circles around the unquenched craving towards the golden deer, the symbol of that which is unattainable. In 'Bane o Rajye' of *Chaitali*, Rabindranath has delineated the heart-wrenching despondency of Rama even though has been separated from Sita from many days. In the poem 'Abhilash', published in *Tattvabodhini Patrika* in 1874 when Rabindranath was an adolescent, Rabindranath alluded to both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

Rabindranath and the *Mahabharata*

Rabindranath always considered the *Mahabharata* as a great lyrical poem: gita kavya. His poem 'Puraskar' in the collection *Sonar Tari* is a poetic version of what he saw as the quintessence of the *Mahabharata* as well as that of the *Ramayana*. The essay 'Bisvabidyayer Rup' (1932) included in the enlarged edition of the book *Siksha* bears out Rabindranath's respect for the *Mahabharata*. He had not read the original version of Veda Vyasa, but had the translated version supervised by Kaliprasanna Singha. In the pieces 'Anadikar' and 'Adhikar' included in the 1883 collection of essays *Bibidha Prasanga*, the young writer quotes and explains portions of the translated version. In the essay on the 'Ramayana' in *Prachin Sahitya*, the poet has linked the themes of the two epics through the common strand of ideological consonance. In such essays as 'Sahityer Chitrabibhag' and 'Sahityer Matra' in the book *Sahityer Svarup*, Rabindranath comments on the different components of the *Mahabharata*. The poet alludes to *Srimad Bhagabat Gita* in different essays of Santiniketan. *Slokas* from the text reappear in his novel *Jogajog*.

Based on episodes in the *Mahabharata*, Rabindranath composed a bunch of poetic dramas: *Chitrangada*, *Biday-Abhisap*, 'Gandharir Abedan', 'Narakbas', and *Karna-Kunti Sambad*. Excluding *Chitrangada* which has multiple versions 1892 onward including the dance-drama, and *Biday-Abhisap* first published with the second edition of *Chitrangada* in 1894, all the other kavya-natyas were later published in the two collections of narrative verse *Katha* (1900) and *Kahini* (1900) and their combined editions. Stressing lyricism at the expense of dramatic passion, these compositions may be regarded as plays meant to be read rather than performed.

In *Karna-Kunti Sambad* Rabindranath has not projected Karna as the character one finds in the *Mahabharata*. Rather he has branded Karna as a character of contrasting traits, relentless

yet tender. The poet brings in an element of conflict and dilemma within the character, thus making him a character of remarkable contradictions. In 'Gandharir Abedan', on the other hand, Rabindranath has retained the intrinsic features of Gandhari as portrayed in the *Mahabharata*, while imparting to her individuality firm contours. In the Kacha-Debajani episode of the *Mahabharata*, Kacha curses Debajani. But Rabindranath, with his faith in love, turns Kacha in *Biday-Abhisap* into a different character. Kacha becomes a symbol of patience and endurance, who showers blessings on Debajani. *Chitrangada* is, of course, the best of the specimens, in which he turns a minor episode into an exploration of the nature of love and femininity.

Rabindranath was allured by the rhythmic virtuosity of *Gitagovinda* composed by Jayadeva in the twelfth century. In his book *Chhanda* Rabindranath repeatedly draws attention to the diverse rhythmic patterns of *Gitagovinda*. Evidence of Jayadeva's influence is not hard to find in the works of Rabindranath. In addition, there are certain technical terms that Rabindranath borrowed from the Sanskrit. For example, the term *pratibodha-vidita* was extracted from the *Kena Upanishad* and used in his book *Manusher Dharma*. In the same way, the term *patatri* was extracted from *Kumarasambhavam* (5:4) and deployed in *Chithipatra* (9:31).

The reflective essays of Rabindranath are often indebted to Sanskrit literature. The Sanskrit language as a whole exerted a profound influence in shaping his vision, cognition, emotion and philosophy. In the essay entitled 'Hindubibaha' in *Samaj*, Rabindranath confessed he lacked technical expertise in Sanskrit philology. But it is beyond doubt that, one has to look at Sanskrit language and literature to have total picture of Rabindranath's literary world. Rabindranath himself was an ardent proponent of the notion that the knowledge of the Bengali language could never be complete without a basic comprehension of Sanskrit.

Rabindranath imbibed the essence of the Sanskrit literature he studied with a creator's gift. The heritage of Sanskrit literature

was judiciously deployed in his writing, and Sanskrit literature contributed substantially towards his development, not only as a writer but also as a complete human being. By dint of practice, talent, intellect and emotional intensity, Rabindranath succeeded in renewing the rich legacy of Sanskrit literature. We may conclude with echoing Atulchandra Gupta's opinion: even when words and phrases in Rabindranath's Bengali poetry were the same as in the Sanskrit sources from which they were borrowed, the 'sameness in sound is all important'. The expressions were at home in their new habitat, and the language of classical Sanskrit literature, as much as Bengali, was Rabindranath's 'literary mother tongue'.²⁰

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Marmer majhkhane,
Kato dibaser kato sanchay
Rekhe jao mor prane!
He atit, tumi bhubane bhubane
Kaj kore jao gopane gopane,
Mukhar diner chapalata-majhe
Sthir hoye tumi rao.
He atit, tumi gopane hridaye
Katha kao, katha kao. ([Prabesak], *Katha*)
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12. *Ami jadi janma nitem*
Kalidasaer kale,
Doibe hotem dasam ratna
Nabaratner male... ('Sekal', *Kshanika*)
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14. *Ibid.*
15. For the translation see, *Rabindranath Tagore, Selected Poems*, trans. William Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1995).
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17. See Bhabatosh Datta, *Rabindranath Tagore on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata* (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 1995).
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PART III
THE IMPACT ON OTHER
INDIAN LITERATURES

AESTHETIC ATTITUDE OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND ITS REFLECTION IN ASSAMESE POETRY

PALLAVI DEKA BUZARBORUAH

0.0 Preface

There is no universal definition of aesthetics. The concept is relative, varying from time to time and culture to culture. However, it may be said that aesthetics is a kind of feeling which produces joy. The joy is not a result of sensual gratification. Sensual gratification, of course, may give pleasure, but pleasure reaches completeness only in the realization of pure joy. We may cite the example of colour and smell. The eyes and the nose are the doorways to colour and smell respectively, yet, at the aesthetic level, the role of the organs is diminished. The process leads to *rasa* or the joy derived from aesthetic beauty. *Rasa* and joy complement each other. The joy involved in *rasa* cannot be caused by sensual gratification, that is, it stimulates the mind rather than excites the body.

There is no concept of *rasa* in Western aesthetics. Instead, it uses the term 'aesthetic feeling'. Alexander Baumgarten used the term 'aesthetic' for the first time in a philosophical context to refer to beauty that is created to cause joy. In Indian writing on art, the term *nandantattva* is used as a synonym of aesthetics. Surendranath Dasgupta used the alternative term *bikshasastra*. The Sanskrit root *iksha* is similar to the Greek *aisthetikos*, referring to things that are seen. The Greek word connotes objects that are apprehended by any sense organ. *Biksha* carries the primary connotation of observation, and a sense close to realization. That is why *bikshasastra* may be a suitable synonym for the term aesthetics.

0.1 The Unification of Aesthetics and *Rasa*

There is a difference in the Indian and Western attitudes to aesthetics. The wise tend to agree that unspoken words are more intense than the spoken. Relaxed and pleasurable feelings are referred to as *rasa*. The English word 'beauty' comes close to the sense of the term. In ancient Indian *alamkar sastra* (the theory of rhetoric and aesthetics), the terms *saundarya* and *chamatkar* are also used to mean beauty. Indian scholars such as Anandabardhan, Abhinavagupta, and Kuntakacharya used the word *chamatkar* to mean beauty. The term *ramaniyata* is also used along with *chamatkarittva*. Indian *alamkarik* Jagannath said in *Rasa Gangadhar*: 'A little *rasa* is attached with all kind of *ramaniyata*. But in some cases the term *ramaniyata* is more preferable to *rasa*.' Therefore, it can be said that *ramaniyata* has an identity independent of *rasa*, and that the terms 'beauty' and *ramaniyata* are synonymous. Pandit Jagannath also said that wisdom, pleasure and creativity are related to beauty. Western critics do not consider divine self (*bhagavat satta*) and beauty to be the same as some Eastern theorists do. They consider beauty to be the idea of absolute beauty. Benedetto Croce is one of the leading supporters of this view. According to him, the realization of beauty depends

on intuition and he believes that the aim of art is expression. At the same time, artistic expression involves beauty. Therefore, ultimately beauty depends on the absoluteness of the imagination.

The Western idealist interpretation of beauty is as comprehensive as the Indian theory of *rasa*. Many Western scholars have been trying to define beauty from Plato to the present time. According to Plato, our world is an incomplete version of the ideal world. Hence, complete beauty is beyond sensual experience. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle found beauty in the midst of discipline, similarity and clarity. In the eighteenth century, Baumgarten theorized beauty in the third chapter of *What is Art?* as the perfect (the absolute) recognized through the senses, while truth was the perfect reached by the moral will. In the same century, the Earl of Shaftesbury in his *Characteristics* defined the beautiful as things which were proportionate, well organized and balanced. At the end of the century, in the third *Critique* or *The Critique of Judgement*, Immanuel Kant wrote that there could be 'no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts.' In the following century, Hegel's *Aesthetics*, his lectures on fine art, conceived of beauty as the limited expression of idea and the limited form of infinity.

However, Western critics have failed to explain whether beauty existed in matter or in feelings attached to matter. On the other hand, the theory of *rasa* accepts that *rasas* may be beyond interpretation. In their acceptance of this mysterious element, Western aesthetic theorists and Indian *alankariks* seem to agree.

0.2 Poetic Feeling and Beauty

The sense of beauty develops on the basis of feelings. Therefore, there is a likeness between the sense of beauty and poetic feelings. A poet will be able to create poetic art if he possesses poetic feelings. Again, a reader will be able to enjoy poetic art if she has the aesthetic sense.

The pleasure which arises from poetic beauty is *kavya rasa* (i.e., poetic feelings). In the *rasa* tradition, it is believed that the meaning of the word is the flesh of the poetry and the *rasa* is the soul. Bharata stated in his *Natyashastra* that *rasa* is the most important element in drama. Indian *alamkariks* have been trying to stress the response of conscious readers as a source of inspiration and repeated creative practice. Plato emphasized the moral life, and was suspicious of poetry. Yet he said that the main purpose of a poem was to give pleasure. English Romantic poets not only emphasized pleasure, but believed that truth could be established through beauty. Whether it is the poetry of the East or of the West, the sense of beauty, joy and the feelings of love are linked to poetry.

1.0 Tagore's Views on Aesthetics

Rabindranath Tagore considered beauty as a form of unity in diversity. His views of beauty at times recall the thoughts of Hegel. Hegel believed that spirit expressed itself through matter. He also said that beauty arose when unspecific reality expressed itself through specific matter. But Hegel was not clear on why this unspecific reality or spirit should express itself in a specific form. In the *Upanishad*, it is clearly stated that there is a universal spirit within an individual that is symmetrical and absolute. In its realization the world and the absolute correspond (*Brihadaranyak*, 2:5:1). Tagore's sense of beauty is a combination of Western and *Upanishadic* philosophy. His sense of beauty not only involves its union with joy, truth and goodness, but also with love. He considered joy as an instinctive sense of freedom and beauty, a sense that might be hindered by a hypertrophy of mind, of the powers of cogitation, as he explained in the piece 'Man' (Mind) in *Panchabhut*. Joy is hence an independent feeling which is unlike happiness. In the same way, he wrote in *Chhinna Patra* that beauty is beyond the ultimate powers of sensory apprehension: '*soundarya indriyer chudanta saktiro atit*'.

At the same time, there is a relation between beauty and goodness. Tagore in this matter was guided by Indian spiritual thought and he provided a unique and independent form to aesthetic thinking by intimately correlating truth, joy, goodness and love. To this he joins the question of expression: abstract feelings of joy express themselves in concrete form.

One key concept of his philosophy of beauty is that a human being should widen one's personality and overcome narrowness. Only then would a human being be able to be one with world. This universality, especially stressed in the essays of *Sahitya*, would be the basis of joy and beauty. There are instances of such luminous moments when the thought struck him in his autobiography *Jibansmriti*.

1.1 Reflection of Tagore's Sense of Beauty in His Poetry

Tagore's longing for the infinite is one with his sense of belonging to the whole world. This is witnessed in such an early poem as 'Pratidhvani', which is part of his collection entitled *Prabhatsangit*. The young Tagore explored the various expressions of the relationship between nature and humans, and he felt that there was nothing in the world that was joyless. This is clear in the poems of the collection *Chhabi o Gan* (see, for instance, the yearning expressed in 'Madhyahne'). The enjoyment of beauty of the selfless relation between nature and human is the spirit of *Chhabi o Gan*. He was, as he once wrote to Pramatha Chaudhuri in a letter (published in *Sabuj Patra*, 1324 BS), intensely concerned with the idea of beauty when he wrote the poem in the collection.

He searches for the absolute soul beyond time and space in the first poem 'Pran' in the collection entitled *Kadi o Komal*. He does not want to leave the world he loves, and feels the presence of the absolute everywhere in it. As he says in another poem, beauty, the source of joy, is unified with the human and absolute soul:

*Tomar soundraye hok manab sundar,
Preme taba biswa hok alo.
Tomare heriya jeno mugdha antar
Manushe manush base bhalo.*

'Mangal-geet' 2, *Kadi o Komal*

He imagines the beauty of nature as a woman, and he falls in love with her. That love provides him with a feeling of happiness, but he does not feel that it is simply as pleasure. The engagement with the idea of pure joy is observed other poems of *Kadi o Komal*, such as 'Moha', 'Bandi', 'Pabitra Prem', 'Chhoto Phul', 'Kalpanamadhup' and 'Baner Chhaya'.

In the poems of *Manasi*, he praises the beauty which is the result of the union of body and mind. He takes a step further in the progress toward infinite beauty. He feels that infinite beauty can be realized in living beings, in nature and in the human community. Hence, as in 'Purusher Ukti', he reaches out for his beloved, the endless source of beauty in the imagined woman. Love and beauty run parallel in the poems in *Sonar Tari*. Abstract beauty he finds in the changing seasons, in taste, smell and touch, in the plants, sky, fields, river, sun, moon and stars:

*Bhalobasiyachhi ami dhuli mati tor.
Janmechhi je martya-kole, ghrina kari tare
Chhutibo na swarga ar mukti khnujibare*

'Atmasamarpan', *Sonar Tari*

Similarly in 'Basundhara', he finds himself at one with the world which is a limitless source of life experiences, enriching his intellect and imagination. He realizes the infinity and absoluteness of the world through the imagination and the beauty of an imagined woman (who is also imagination and poetry) in his poem 'Manassundari'.

In the poems of *Chitra*, he tries to take an objective view of beauty. He looks for the ideal in the outside world, and conjures up a concrete model of such beauty in the poem 'Urbasi'. Urbasi is the

epitome of the beauty humans yearn for, an image of the goddess Lakshmi. Such beauty can be imagined but cannot be apprehended by the senses. The diverse beauty of natural forms are represented as composite and organized in poems such as 'Purnima' (which mocks aesthetic theories of the learned) and 'Bijayini'. He conceives of woman as the primitive form of beauty in his poem 'Bijayini'. In the poem 'Marichika', he expresses his inability to express in language the beauty felt by the parched heart.

There are four stages in the representation of beauty in *Chitra*:

- 1) First, he feels internal and external beauty as different.
- 2) Secondly, he tries to capture the sense of the stable, abstract beauty of the non-material world.
- 3) Thirdly, he imagines absolute beauty in the form of a loving woman.
- 4) Fourthly, he feels a sense of pure devotion before this divine form.

He expresses himself as the worshiper of the *Upanishadic anandamantra* (*Taittiriya* 3:6) in the collection *Kshanika*. He tries to enjoy all the beauty and joy of the world though it is tormented by discontent and suffering ('Udbodhan'). The poet realizes that, ignoring money, fame and power, there is something in human beings that wants to devote itself to the search of beauty, an element that, like the form of beauty itself, is inexpressible and beyond reason. He explores this bond between joy, nature and beauty in poems such as 'Atithi', 'Nababarsha', and 'Kalyani'.

From this point on, Tagore's thought extends towards spirituality. He expresses his wish of devoting himself to the search of truth in the poems of *Kheya*. The spiritual strain grows stronger in the Bengali collection *Gitanjali*, in which he often meditates on the union of the absolute and the individual soul. He feels the invitation of the absolute soul for liberation:

*Jagate anandajajnye aamar nimantran
 Dhanya halo dhanya halo manabjiban.
 Nayan amar ruper pure
 Sadh mitaye beray ghure,
 Sraban aamar gabhir sure
 Hayechhe magan.*

'44', Gitanjali

Tagore's aesthetic sense is unbounded by time and space, and it is hard to distinguish it from joy and truth.

The link between beauty and the love of nature is again a major theme in the collection *Purabi*. The idea of *jiban debata* is crucial to many of these poems. It leads the poet to the truth, although he is not always able to reach the *debata* so familiar to him (see 'Lilasangini' in *Purabi*). The poet apprehends its beauty through sadness, miseries and conflicts (see 'Bethik Pather Pathik' in *Purabi*). In the poems of *Banabani*, he seems to perceive the world as illumined by an internal source of beauty (see 'Bhumika'). Likewise, he returns to the praise of nature in his late collection *Parishes* in such poems as 'Janmadin'. In 'Pranam' (the first of the two poems so titled in the collection), he speaks of beauty as expressed in language, rhythm and music. In one of his last collections, he still wrote in the first poem of the book *Arogya*, published in the year of his demise, that the world is beautiful and replete with joy despite all ills and the inevitability of death.

2.0 The Reflection of Tagore's Aesthetic Sense in Assamese Poetry

The literature of Rabindranath Tagore developed in the last decade of the nineteenth century influenced Indian writers in other parts of the country. Many of the Romantic poets in Assamese lived in Bengal, and Tagore's influence reached writers in Assam partly through their mediation. Many Assamese poets met Tagore, and those who did not were not free from his influence. Contemporary

Assamese writers studied his thought, form and style. Along with these, his aesthetic views influenced Assamese poets.

Tagore's idea of absolute beauty as beyond time and space is reflected in the Assamese poet Chandrakumar Agarwala:

Gyanamaya premamaya pranar iswar
Satya tumi Siva tumi asim sundar
 'Chandramrit'

In the same vein, Surya Kumar Bhuyan writes:

Satya ji sundar jar ananta jaouban
Tarei bukut moi patim kanon
 'Nirmali'

Tagore realized the truth in the world and identified the truth within the material with absolute beauty. This notion is reflected in the works of different Assamese writers such as Lakshminath Bezbarua. This would be evident if one compared, for instance, Tagore's poems on this theme, such as the 21st poem of *Utsarga*, with Bezbarua's 'Kadamkoli'. The idea of the woman representing the union of the beauty, joy and love is seen in Ratnakanta Barkakaty's poems: uses maximum imagination to praise the beauty of body and mind of women. He sees his beloved as the conjunction of all beauty:

Til til koi harila biswa
Tilottama hoi karila nisva
Kadhila jonar much
Aakasar kola
Korila udang
 'Biswaharan', Sewali

Ratnakanta Barkakaty followed Tagore's attitude to beauty. There is also a similarity in the use of language and expression between the poems 'Dharapara' of Barkakaty and 'Urbasi' of Tagore. Nilamani Phukan, Parbati Prasad Baruah and Ambikagiri Raichaudhury also tried to link absolute joy and aesthetic pleasure that is a major theme in Tagore's reflections on beauty. Tagore's

'Sarat' in *Kalpana* bears comparison with the ninth poem of Parvati Prasad Boruah's *Sukula Dawor oi Kohua Phul*. Particularly worthwhile would be a reading of Nilamani Phukan's 'Chirasundar' in the light of the aesthetic creed as reflected in the 80th poem of Tagore's *Naibedya*.

Tagore felt that the absolute beauty showed itself in the fragmented beauty of the concrete world, yet, despite feeling its presence, its nature remains mysterious. This Tagorean element is noticed in a few Assamese writers, such as in Ratnakanta Barkakaty and Nalinibala Devi. Two good instances are the poems are Barkakaty's poem 'Sundar' in *Sewali*, and Nalinibala Devi's 'Koun Tumi' in *Sandhiyar Sur*, which may be compared to Tagore's 'Tumi' in *Kadi o Komal*. One could, to multiply instances, read Ratnakanta Barkakaty's 'Sarba Rupat' in *Sewali* in the light of Tagore's 'Manassundari' in *Sonar Tari*.

The *anandatattva* of *Upanishad* enabled Tagore to identify the ultimate spirit with the endless source of beauty and joy. This identity of beauty, joy and the absolute is reflected in a few Assamese poems, such as 'Sundare je phular mantra' of Jyotiprasad Agarwala, which may be read alongside the 54th poem of *Gitanjali*. In the same way, Nabakanta Barua's 'Kripan, Mor aru Prithivir' should be compared with the 47th poem of *Gitanjali*. Nabakanta Barua's aesthetic vision is best seen in the collection *Kshyanika*, where that which is transitory is invested with joy and meaning.

3.0 Conclusion

Tagore's aesthetics was not part of any religion, as it was for some Western thinkers on the subject. He was willing to allow art a certain autonomy, although there was a spiritual dimension to his reflections on beauty. A number of Assamese poets were influenced by this stance. This discussion cites only a few instances. In spite of their keen consciousness of regional heritage and identity, Assamese poets have always shown a generous acceptance of

Tagore's philosophy and used it in their own creative work. Tagore in this sense has had a salutary effect on widening their perception of aesthetic and literature.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND GUJARATI LITERATURE

VINOD JOSHI

The influence of a literary master may always be discerned in succeeding writers. This is true of the literatures in most Indian languages that followed Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's chief language of expression was Bengali, but his influence could be traced in the writers and poets of many other Indian languages.

Gujarati was no exception. Among Bengali writers, Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay are favoured by Gujarati readers. Tagore's novels and short stories have been printed, re-printed and published recurrently over many years in Gujarati. *Tagore Granthmala* is a good example. On 7 May 1981, a set of five books named *Rabinidranathano Sahitya-Varso* (Rabindranath's Literary Heritage) was published to mark the poet's 120th birth anniversary. It contained select poems, short stories, novels, essays and letters. The print run of 500 copies was well received. Lately, another publication has been published: *Rabindra Patra-marmar* which includes letters to his wife, and to

the poets Sudhindranath Dutta and Amiya Chakrabarti.

Mahadev Desai, later personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi was the first person to translate Tagore's work into Gujarati. His version of *Chitrangada* was published in 1915, translated from the original verse drama into prose.

According to the Gujarat State Copy Library, there are some 4 autobiographies, 20 poems, 25 plays, 75 fiction, 27 essays, letters, philosophical writings of Tagore translated into Gujarati until 1986. There are also instances when one can find more than one translation of the same work. *Gitanjali* has attracted translations in various languages. Yet it is interesting that it was *Chitrangada* and not *Gitanjali* that was translated first in Gujarati. As of now, there are 8 translations of *Gitanjali* in Gujarati of which 6 are translated from the English version of Tagore. The very first one was published in 1918 by Manibhai Desai. The most authentic translation of *Gitanjali* came in 1941 and was done by Nagindas Parekh.

Nagindas Parekh has translated some 35 works of Tagore into Gujarati. Of the two translations of the poetical work *Naibedya*, one is by Narsinhbhai Patel published in 1923 and the other is by Nagindas Parekh published in 1927. The latter one has a fine introduction by the Gujarati poet Umasankar Joshi.

Katha o Kahini, a collection of narrative poems, has been frequently translated. Zaverchand Meghani has been accredited with popularizing Tagore's poetry in Gujarat when he came up with *Kurbanini Kathao*. This was a prose transcreation based on *Katha o Kahini*. In 1944, Meghani published *Rabindra Bina*. Meghani's renderings serve Tagore's poems with a Gujarati garnishing.

The quality of these translations is uneven. What is of importance is that a significant number of well-known Gujarati writers have loved Tagore and have made his writings accessible to local readers by taking up translation and, at times, transcreation. These writers include Nagindas Parekh, Ramanlal Soni, Bhogilal

Gandhi, Sures Joshi, Niranjana Bhagat, Umasankar Joshi, Jayantilal Acharya and Bachubhai Shukla.

Among the novels, *Gora* and *Chokher Bali* have been translated three times by different translators. Some abridged versions of these novels too have been produced in Gujarati.

Translation of philosophical and other writings too have been undertaken such as *Santiniketan*, *Pancha Bhut*, *Swadesi Samaj*, *Purba-Paschim*, and *Visva-Parichaya*. Gujarati may boast of the translations of two very important books on Rabindranath Tagore by Abu Said Ayyub, viz., *Rabindranath o Adhunikata* and *Pantha Janer Sakha*.

Rabindranath Tagore became known to the writers of other Indian languages after he was awarded the Nobel prize in 1913. Since the twenties his influence became distinguishable. Umasankar Joshi thought that the influence of Tagore on Gujarati language in the nineteen twenties was less than significant. Yet many teachers and students came under Tagore's spell. Kaka Kalelkar and J. B. Kripalani are known to have been fervent admirers. They inspired their students to read as much of Tagore as they could. Along with the activism for national independence, learning and creativity too flourished in Gujarati literature.

Gitanjali's prose translations were an inspiration for many writers, even for the emerging writers during the early thirties influenced by Gandhiji. Sundaram and Umasankar Joshi, two great Gujarati poets, were not much influenced by Tagore, whereas Krishnalal Sridharani who was their contemporary became an ardent admirer, and enrolled himself as a student at Santiniketan after graduating from Gujarat Vidyapeeth. However, in 1944, Umasankar Joshi published *Prachina* a collection of seven dialogue poems, arguably influenced by Tagore's dialogue poems like *Karnakunti Sambad*, *Gandharir Abedan*, and *Bidaya Abhisap*. Thus, even those whose writings eluded Tagore's influence, were touched by his philosophy and ideals.

Prahlad Parekh, a poet and a student of Santiniketan published his collection of poems *Bari Bahar* in 1940. This was seen as a landmark in Gujarati poetry. Parekh was heavily influenced by *saundarya chetana*, the Tagorean sense of beauty. In the forties, Tagore's influence resurfaced in the poetry of Rajendra Shah and Niranjan Bhagat. In his inaugural address at the poet's symposium of Nikhil Bharat Banga Sahitya Sammelan held at Ahmedabad in 1957, Niranjan Bhagat said:

I, a child of Gujarat, was seduced into poetry by a poet of Bengal ... Like many a son of this country I came under the spell of Rabindranath's poetry in my early teens. I devoured it in English translations ... I taught myself Bengali to be able to read Rabindranath in untranslatable original. Under this second spell I lisped a few lyrics in Bengali ... only thereafter I wrote in my own tongue.

In the songs of Rajendra Shah and Niranjan Bhagat, one can detect the impressions of Tagore's songs. *Niruddeshe* and *Sesh Abhisar* are two poems of Rajendra Shah in which one can find a few images of Tagore. Rajendra Shah has translated Tagore's *Balaka* and Niranjan Bhagat his *Chitrangada*. Both translations are in verse.

Sures Joshi, a modernist Gujarati writer has translated many poets from Baudelaire to Tagore. A modernist in many ways, the Romantic strain in his writings may be laid at the door of Tagore's influence. Sures Joshi was moved by *Chhinna Patra* and found Tagore a writer of beautiful prose. Joshi's personal prose such as *Janantike*, reflect this admiration of Tagore, the writer of non-fiction prose.

Umasankar Joshi has recorded the impact on him of Tagore's critical writings, especially of *Prachin Sahitya*:

I vividly remember how, as a college student (in early thirties), I would sit on the banks of Sabarmati and recite to myself over and over again, for sheer joy, passages from the translation of *Prachin Sahitya*. This book cast a spell on all

students of literature and the ideas contained in it became widely known.

Prachin Sahitya is often prescribed as a text for undergraduates opting for Gujarati as the major subject. *Gora*, *Ghare Bahire* and many other Tagore's stories are at times taught at the graduate and post-graduate levels.

Tagore's dance-drama was introduced to the Gujarati theatre by some Gujarati students at Santiniketan such as Bachubhai Sukla and Pinakin Trivedi. Gujarati plays of this genre written later kept the Tagorean link alive in Gujarati literature.

Since the twenties, about 150 articles on Tagore have been published in varied Gujarati periodicals. This is enough evidence of the extent to which Tagore has influenced Gujarati writers. Tagore continues to be rediscovered and reinvented by each generation of Gujarati writers. Some were inspired by Tagore's ideas, and some loved the lyric poet, while yet others admired him as a master of carefully wrought prose.

* Based on the critical views of the Gujarati writer Bholabhai Patel.

INFLUENCE OF TAGORE ON HINDI LITERATURE

SOMA BANDYOPADHYAY

Hindi and Bengali have had an interactive relationship since long. Even before the Turkish invasion, that is, since around the tenth century, the ancient form of Hindi known as *souraseni apabhramsa*, was used in Bengal and poems composed in it. In much the same way, *brajabuli* literature in Bengal may claim a special kinship with Hindi. After the Chaitanya era, that is the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it was during the time of Tagore that the cultural links between Hindi and Bengali literatures grew stronger.

Tagore has played an indispensable role in the development of our literatures, and this is true of Hindi literature too. Poets and literary artists in Hindi have acknowledged that the soul of India has found its fullest representation in Tagore. His broad view of the world, his generosity toward diverse cultures, his philosophical mysticism, his concept of love and nature and his aesthetic sense have been sources of inspiration for Hindi writers.

In this context, special mention should be made of the Hindi *chhayavadi* poets. In Tagore's era, the common Bengali reader did not know much about Hindi literature. This wall of unfamiliarity was broken by Tagore. Much early in his creative life, he wrote a preface to the collected works of the poet Sundardas, in which he said that Hindi literature had a natural claim to respectability. He had deep respect for the saint-poets of the medieval age. In his childhood, he was fascinated by the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas. He was attracted to the hagiographical collection *Bhaktamal* and to works of Kabir, Tulsidas and Surdas. He had written poems on these three poets. Hindi Bhavan at Santiniketan, established in 1939, is a proof of the poet's love for Hindi literature. The charge of Hindi Bhavan was entrusted to Acharya Hazariprasad Dwivedi, the famous essayist, novelist, playwright and critic of Hindi literature. As professor, Hazariji taught at Santiniketan for twenty years and edited the *Visva-Bharati Patrika*.

In the Preface to the first volume (January 1942) of *Visva-Bharati Patrika*, Acharya Dwivedi wrote that at the inauguration of the Hindi Bhavan, Gurudev expressed his wish for the publication of a journal from Visva-Bharati that should be a medium for the popularization and development of the best in Indian culture and literature. But funds were scarce. It was with the help of Maharaja Suryapal Singh of Abhagarh that publication was possible. It is ironic that the first volume of the journal was published in 1942, a year after Tagore's death. This quarterly publication created a perceptible sensation in the Hindi literary scene. Although seemingly strange, the journal always had the name of the late Tagore among its group of editors. It also had other distinguished names in the editorial team – Kshitimohan Sen, Nandalal Bose, Gurudayal Mallick and Krishna Kripalani. Its purpose would be printed on the second page of a number:

Visva-Bharati Patrika, Visva-Bharati (Santiniketan) ke tatvavadhan mein prakashit hoti hain. Isiliye iske uddeshwa wohi hain, jo Visva-Bharati ke. Kintu iska Karmakshetra yehi

tak simit nahi hain. Sampadak mandal un sabhi vidwanon aur kalakaron ka sahayog amantrit karta hain jinki rachnayen aur kalakritiyan jati dharm nirvishesh samast manavjati ki kalyan-buddhi se prerit hain aur samuchi manaviya sanskriti ko samridh karti hain.

Apart from articles on literature, culture, civilization, religion, philosophy, art, music, education, politics and society, the journal also published criticism of Indian and foreign literatures. Special importance was given to translated versions of Tagore's works in Hindi. The first article in the journal would always be a Hindi translation of Tagore's poem. Sometimes, the original poem would be printed in Nagri script, along with the translation. Bhawaniprasad Mishra, one of the finest poets in Hindi literature, made rhymed translations of many poems by Tagore. Many essays, novels and plays of Tagore were translated into Hindi by Kshitimohan Sen, Mohanlal Vajpayee, Krishna Kripalani and Hazariprasad Dwivedi. Under the pseudonym of Vyomkesh Sastri, Dwivedi translated important works of Tagore which were appreciated across India.

A highly acclaimed Tagore scholar, Acharya Dwivedi was associated with the poet for twelve long years. This resulted in his book *Mrityunjay Ravindra*. In the preface, he had written: 'A great person is one who awakes divinity in those who come in touch with him. Rabindranath was such a great, noble man.' The depth of Tagore's influence on Acharya Dwivedi becomes evident in the following quote, from his book *Mrityunjay Ravindra*:

Ravindranath aise mahan purush the. Unke pas shanbhar baithna param saubhagya ka vishay tha. Sada unse nayi prerna aur naya sandesh milta tha. Weh vidhatake bheje huye paripurna manushya the. Weh sachhe arthon me guru the.

The book contains essays on Tagore's personality and his various works. It has three parts: (1) *Vyaktitva* (personality) (2) *Krititva* (achievements) and (3) *Kavya* (comprising 23 long poems

by Tagore, translated into Hindi by Dwivediji himself).

However, readers of Hindi literature had been acquainted with the works of Rabindranath much before Dwivediji arrived in Santiniketan. Other Hindi writers had met him and developed a close association. Tagore's influence on Hindi poets and literary artists becomes apparent in the following statement by Dwivedi:

The influence (of Rabindranath) has been more pronounced in the realm of poetry than in any other branch of Hindi literature. This mystic element in *Gitanjali* kindled the imagination of the young and sprouting generation of Hindi poets, who began to emulate and imitate it consciously or unconsciously ... This new type of Hindi poetry was named *Chhayavadi*.

In fact, most Indian poets throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century were influenced by Tagore. Among these, the *chhayavaadi* poets in Hindi are an important group and the first and the most eminent of them is Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala'. Educated and brought up in Bengal, its culture was a major influence in the Nirala's poetic growth. The influence of Tagore's mysticism is partially evident in the earliest works of Nirala. The first poem 'Bhar dete ho' in the second volume of his collection *Parimal* is a good example. Poems such as 'Badal Rup' and 'Adhivas' centre on the conflict between *maya* and *brahma*. This is common to many poems, specially the ones in *Gitika* contain a major influence of Tagore's 'Antarjami'. Tagore had written:

*Antar majhe bosi ahoro ho mukh hote tumi bhasha kere laho,
Mor katha loye tumi katha kaho, misaye apon sure.*

Much the same strain is echoed in the poem by Nirala:

*Tumhi gaati ho apna gaan, vyarth main pata hoon samman
Bhavna rang di tumne, pran chhand bandhon main nij ahvan!*

But Nirala was most influenced by the romantic thoughts of Tagore, which becomes evident in the poem 'Juhi ki Kali'. One

example is enough to illustrate the influence of Rabindranath's diction and style on Nirala. In 'Manas Sundari', Tagore had written:

*Aj kono kaj noy, sab phele diye
Chhandobaddho granthogit, eso tumi priye*

The same sensibility is expressed in the poem 'Pragalbh Prem' by Nirala:

*Aaj nahin hai mujhe aur kuch chah
Ardh vikach is hriday kamal main a tu,
Priya, chod kar bandhanmay, chhandon ki chhoti rah*

In his famous elegy 'Saroj Smriti', Nirala compared the torrential flow of water along the dam on the river Bhagavati with the uncontrollable human passions:

*Par bandha deha ka divya bandh
Chhalakta drigon se sadh-sadh.*

This, in a way, is a reflection of Tagore's thought in 'Bijayini':

*Angey angey joubaneri taranga uchchhal
Labonyer mayamantrey sthir achanchal*

Again in his poem 'Banabela', Nirala has resorted to the following simile while describing an apsara:

*Apsara sudhar
Sikta tanu kes, shat laharon par
Kampti visvake chakit drisyake darsan shar.*

This surely reminds us of the following line from Tagore's 'Urbashi':

*Sarbange kandibe tabo nikhiler nayan aghate
Baribindu pate*

Examples like these are many. Although Nirala came out of this influence during the second and third phase of his creative life and started writing in a distinctive style, one has to acknowledge that he was deeply inspired by Tagore's ideas. Such was the extent

of his inspiration that he wrote a whole book on Rabindranath, titled *Ravindra Kavita Kanan*.

Tagore's *Katha o Kahini* was a favourite of Nirala. He ardently wanted poems like 'Suradaser Prarthana' to be written in Hindi too. According to the eminent critic of Hindi literature, Ramvilas Sarma, 'Tulsidas' by Nirala is the product of this desire. But, Nirala's style and sensibility was quite different from Tagore's. This is evident in the following statement by Hazariprasad Dwivedi:

Nirala, a poet of stature, who was brought up and educated in Bengal, held high the banner of revolt. He translated some poems and he was deeply drunk in the genius of Rabindranath's literary love. I should not be misunderstood here. Nirala is by no means, an imitator or a carbon copy of Rabindranath. He is something different, but his creative genius has been deeply stirred by Tagore's poetical works. (*Rabindranath and Hindi Literature*).

In *Ravindra Kavita Kanan*, Nirala explored the *vedanta* as the background to some of Tagore's ideas. He also stressed the element of cultural camaraderie through Hindu-Muslim amity. While analysing Tagore's deep understanding of India, Nirala acknowledged that Tagore was unique in delving into the imaginative experience of conflict between inward and outward forces. If Tulsidas represented ancient Indian tradition, a poet whose creative genius was limited to the culture of ancient India, Tagore adapted the aesthetic features of various cultures to modern India.

Rahasyavad or the mystery behind the anxiety and eagerness of union with the Lord is beautifully portrayed in the poems of Mahadevi Verma, another eminent name in the *chhayavadi* poetic tradition. Many of her poems show a sharp resemblance to Tagore's poems. Although Mahadevi could not read Bengali, she was fascinated by the Hindi and English translations of *Gitanjali*. Her poetic works in Hindi come close the mystic

sensibility of Tagore. Hazariprasad Dwivedi was of the opinion that Mahadevi Verma's poems bear a likeness to those in *Gitanjali* and *Gitimalya*: both are musical offerings in the form of dedication and surrender.

Indeed, Verma's *Saandhyageet* vividly reminds us of *Sandhyasangeet*, Tagore's collection of poems. Both have similarities in contexts too. In *Shandhyasangeet*, strains of happiness and misery merge in the poetic soul. The source of misery and melancholy lies in love:

*Sukh baley – e-janmo ghuchaye,
Sadh jay hoite bishad
'Sukher Bela', Sandhyasangeet*

Almost the same thoughts have been expressed by Mahadevi in *Saandhyageet*:

*Ghar aaj chale sukh-dukh bihag,
Tam ponchh raha mera ag-jag*

Melancholy is the chief note in the poems of *Saandhyageet*. Happiness and misery merge to create a world of joy, in which misery is the other face of happiness. It is the union of two apparently conflicting emotions, conjuring up the central theme of her poetry, a product of rare experience born of reality and imagination.

The influence of Tagore is also prominent in the poetry of Sumitranandan Pant, another leading poet of *chhayavaad*. Some of the poems in his collection *Veena* echo the thoughts of *Gitanjali*, such as the following lines:

*Mama jivan ki pramudit prata, sundari nav alokit kar
Vikasit kar, nav survit kar, gunjit kar, kalkunjit kar.
Nirmal kar, ati ujwal kar, manjul kar, mridu mangal kar*

The above lines remind us of Tagore's '*Antara mama bikasito karo, antarataro he*'. It is said that Pantji used to sing Tagore songs supported by the harmonium.

Several other poets who drew on Tagore's thought or style were Maithili Saran Gupta, Siyaram Saran Gupta, Ramkrishna Das, Mukutdhar Pandey and Jai Sankar Prasad. Ramkrishna Das has even defined the period of four years from 1913 to 1917 as '*Gitanjali ki dhoom ka yug*'. Maithili Sharan was so impressed by Tagore's essay 'Kabye Upekshita' that he was impelled to write a chapter on Urmila in his collection of poems *Saket*.

The celebrated Hindi poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar was an avid reader and critic of Tagore's works. Dinkar's life and work bear a prominent influence of Tagore which he had himself acknowledged in many discussions. The book *Ardhnariswar* is an instance Dinkar's creative insight into Tagore's works. *Ardhnariswar* contains 22 essays, well-thought and well-written, out of which four are on Tagore. These are 'Ravindra-Jayanti ke Din', 'Ravindranath ki Rashtriyata evam Antarrashtriyata', 'Kya Ravindranath Abhartiya Hain' and 'Kala ke Ardhnariswar'. The way in which a poet-artist of a different language has expressed his own refined sensibility while talking of Tagore with love and respect makes the essays remarkable. In some passages, Dinkar's analysis of the theoretical and philosophical context of Tagore's poetry is a witness to his critical judgement. In the essay 'Ravindra Jayanti ke Din', he writes:

While reading his poems, I reach a world of sensibility and experience where I feel that Ravindranath is my most favourite poet. He has gone through those experiences in his creative life which elevates every Indian soul. The world of the poet is familiar to us all, his imagery consists of the picturesque vignettes of our courtyard and our souls, the flying particles of dust along the village path in the desolate afternoon, the moon playing hide and seek in the shadows of the pipal tree, the swift motions of the brimming river, the torrential rains, the shadowy villages at the river bank, the sailing boat, the red soiled village path, flocks of dark bluish clouds flying up from the north-western horizon – these are the collages that build up the fabric of life for us.

'Urvasi' and 'Karna Kunti Samvad' are two poetic works of Dinkar that bear clear testimony of Tagore's influence.

Tagore's influence is evident in the works of Banarasi Das Chaturvedi and Rai Krishnadas. The collection of poems *Gitangani* by a recent poet such as Bhawaniprasad Mishra is inspired by *Gitanjali*. Yet, none of these writers blindly imitated Tagore. They deeply internalized Tagore's thoughts and then moulded them according to their own style.

Many researchers have written scholarly books on Tagore in Hindi. Among these, two works deserve special mention. One is *Tagore aur Nirala*, a comparative study of Rabindranath and Suryakant Tripathi Nirala by Awadhprasad Vajpayee. The other is *Adhunik Hindi Kavita aur Ravindra* by Rameswar Dayal Mishra. Some other writers such as Ilachandra Joshi, Banarasi Das Chaturvedi and Rai Krishnadas should also be mentioned in this connection. Ilachandra Joshi studied Tagore's works. Even today, Tagore continues to be the subject of many studies in Hindi. The eminent critic Nagendra has written a book titled *Ravindra ka Bhartiya Sahitya par Prabhav*, and the essayist Kuber Nath Rai has written *Maniputul ke Nam Patra*. Ramsankar Dwivedi has written *Nirala ke Soundarya bodh par Ravindranath ka Prabhav*, while Siv Kumar has written the essay *Ravindranath ki Rajasthan par Kavya-Rachnayan*. Ganga Prasad Vimal is the author of *Ravindranath aur Hindi*, and, more recently, *Ravindra Drishti mein Bharat*. Critical assessments of Tagore continue to appear in Hindi periodicals. Thanks to the translations published by Sahitya Akademi, National Book Trust and other government agencies, translations and studies of Tagore in Hindi has never been short of public patronage. However, works by Tagore had won the hearts of Hindi readers even before he was awarded the Nobel prize in 1913. As a matter of fact, the first translated version of a Tagore novel, *Rajarshi*, was a Hindi rendering by Janardhan Jha and published by Indian Press, Allahabad, in 1910. It was followed by *Bichitra Badhu Rahasya*, a Hindi translation of *Bou Thakuranir Hat*, published by the same

press in 1912. *Aankh ki Kirkiri*, translation of *Chokher Bali* was another contemporary translation. After the Nobel award, Tagore became a celebrity in the global literary community, and more than 70 Hindi translations were published abroad. Icons of Hindi literature such as Premchand, Nirala and Mahadevi Verma were among the translators. No less than 36 writers translated *Gitanjali* in Hindi, the first by Giridhar Sharma Navratna, published by Holkar Hindi Granthamala in 1924. Devendra Kumar Deves is at present working on a study of these 36 Hindi translations. In the year 1961, the Central Braille Press in Dehradun created a brought out the Hindi translation of *Gitanjali* in braille.

The deep influence of Tagore on Hindi literature and culture becomes evident in the following excerpt from the speech of Hazariprasad Dwivedi, read at Santiniketan on the occasion of the hundredth birth anniversary of Tagore: 'Rabindranath touched the innermost creative process in poets and artists throughout our country. He is a poet of the poets, artist of the artists. Here lies the greatness of Rabindranath, neither in the number of translated works nor in superfluous attempt to imitate.'

THE IMPACT OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON KANNADA LITERATURE

C. N. RAMACHANDRAN

Impact or influence is, by nature, abstract and nebulous; hence, despite all the means available to document one's influence, the account is bound to be incomplete. This is especially true of a man like Tagore, who lived, wrote and worked at a time when many other equally great men such as Gandhi, Vivekananda and Aurobindo, lived and worked. Kannada literature and society experienced the impact of all these and other great men and women simultaneously, and it is difficult to isolate the impact of any one individual.

With these reservations, we can begin to map Tagore's impact on modern Kannada literature and society. Broadly speaking, the first half of the twentieth century was the period (called *Navodaya* in Kannada) during which Tagore's influence was at its height; later, during the modernist (called *Navya*) and Protest (called *Bandaya*) periods, his influence was on the wane, though it was surely discernible. Tagore's impact on Kannada can be documented

through a) Kannada translations of Tagore's works, b) biographies and critical works on Tagore in Kannada, and c) reminiscences of Tagore and Santiniketan in the works of Kannada writers.

Translations

i) Many of the early translators of Tagore (such as M. N. Kamat, Narayana Sangama, Prahlad Naregal, and others) went to Santiniketan, learnt Bengali, and translated Tagore's poetry and plays directly from Bengali. In fact, Kamat's translation of the famous poem 'Where the Mind is Free' (from *Gitanjali*), translated directly from Bengali in the twenties of the last century, differs in many significant details from Tagore's own English translation and is said to be nearer to the Bengali version. The translation (*Elli manakalukirado ...*) was and is so popular in Kannada that it has been made a theme song of many educational institutions.

ii) One of the eminent translators, G. Ramanatha Bhat, in his translation of *Gitanjali* (1999), includes 75 poems that Tagore himself had omitted in his English translation. He translates them from original Bengali and also gives their serial number as given in the Bengali version.

iii) It is not an exaggeration to say that in the early decades of the last century, meeting Tagore and studying in Santiniketan was an ideal dream of many a young man in Karnataka as elsewhere. Among such, the most notable were Krishnakumara Kallur, S. G. Kulkarni, Prahlad Naregal, Narayana Sangama, K. Venkatappa, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar (who later received Jnanapith award), A. N. Krishna Rao, and others. Of these, while K. Venkatappa studied painting under Abanindranath Tagore, Narayana Sangama and Rudrappa Hanji studied painting under Nandalal Basu. Two other painters, S. N. Swamy and Alandakar Sankararao met Tagore at Santiniketan, and later they sent their portraits of Tagore to him (Alandkar's portraits had the captions of 'Gurudeva in My Vision' and 'Gurudeva's Life Symbols'). It appears that Tagore

was full of appreciation for these portraits. Sangama and Naregal translated *Gitanjali* directly from Bengali; the other translation by Boodihalamatha available in Kannada till then was based on the English translation.

A. N. Krishna Rao (popularly known as Anakru), the most popular novelist-playwright-scholar in the first half of the twentieth century, not only went to Santiniketan and studied there for a year, but also introduced characters and incidents related to Tagore and Santiniketan in his well-known novel *Sahityaratna* (1943), and wrote in detail on his experiences at Santiniketan in his autobiography *Barahagaarana Baduku* (1972). More importantly, his very first work (1932) was on painting in which, heavily influenced by Abanindranath Tagore and Santiniketan in general, he condemned the style and ideology of the then popular painter Raja Ravi Varma and argued for an indigenous symbolic style.

iv) It is notable that in the early decades of the last century, not only Tagore's poetry and fiction but his discursive writings such as *Prachina Sahitya* and *Sahitya Shrishti* containing Tagore's articles on literature and criticism were translated by T. S. Venkannaiah (Professor of Kannada and writer) and A. N. Narasimhaiah (Professor of grammar and linguistics). Similarly, V. Sitaramaiah, well-known Professor of economics and poet-essayist, published articles (in both Kannada and English) not only on Tagore's literary works but also on Tagore's views on education and painting.

v) The fact that the first complete translation of *Gitanjali* was published in 1942 and another complete translation was published in 2008 demonstrates that Tagore's works are held in reverence even today.

Tagore's World-view and Kannada writers

i) D. R. Bendre, the great poet of love and mysticism and a Jnanapith awardee, was, in his later years, much influenced by Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. But in his early poetry Tagore's influence

is easily traceable. In collaboration with Narayana Sangama who knew Bengali, Bendre translated 101 poems of Tagore including those of *Gitanjali*. In a poem on Tagore, 'Ravindrarige', he registers what he considers the essential qualities of Tagore – a divine singer of love, harmony, peace, and metaphysical quest. He addresses Tagore as *krantadarsi* (a visionary guide) and, punning on the word *ravi*, says that Ravindranath was the sun who put on new rays everyday but never set. In his famous essay, *Namage Bekaada Kavya* (the kind of poetry we need), while discussing Abhinava Gupta's concept of *rasanubhava*, he quotes from Tagore's *Personality*. He states that Tagore also identified *rasa* as an emotional activity, and quotes these lines of Tagore: 'outer juices having their response in the inner juices of our emotion...it (*rasanubhava*) brings to us ideas, vitalized by feelings ready to be made in to the life stuff of our nature" (*Personality*, p. 14).

ii) U. R. Ananthamurthy, the reputed writer of fiction and criticism (another Jnanapith awardee), considers Tagore's novel *Gora* as the most relevant novel of our period; and when he became the President of Sahitya Akademi, he organized a series of seminars on the novel in many parts of India. Also, he spoke extensively on the kind of vision embodied in the novel, a vision of India as a nation of many races and religions. Ananthamurthy considers Tagore's views on nationalism and internationalism a healthy bulwark against fanatic nationalism. In one of his major speeches, delivered in Colombo in the Writers Annual Meet' in 2002, Ananthamurthy talks about the concept of the nation-state, and writes:

It is for this reason that Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore rejected the Western concept of a nation-state. They opted for the kind of nationalism that suited...cultural multiplicity. In this ideology of the two great philosophers, I believe, there is an important lesson for the disturbed present-day world; unfortunately, we are after rich and strong governments; and hence we haven't paid any attention to them.

He reiterated this stand on Tagore in many articles and speeches. In his convocation address at the NSD in 2005, he pointed out that Gandhi and Tagore viewed India more as a civilization than as a nation. In a country of such ideology, there cannot be any place for either fanaticism or the arrogance of national power.

Critical Works on Tagore

Apart from many stray articles written on individual works or aspects, there are six book-length studies on Tagore and his works. Of these, the one by Ha. Ma. Nayak entitled *Ravindranath Thakur* (1960) concentrates entirely on Tagore's biography, with the belief that a great man's life can inspire others to follow in his footsteps. He states in his introduction that, 'Thakur's life itself is poetry.' This work was prescribed as a text-book for Matriculation students for many years, beginning with 1961. The biographies of Javare Gowda and Simpi Linganna are similar to Nayak's work in the sense that they too focus on his life. As contrasted with Nayak's work, Masti's work *Ravindranatha Thakuraru* (1935), written after his visit to Santiniketan and his interview with Tagore, focuses on Tagore's works. His intention is to introduce the major works of Tagore to Kannada readers. Hence, he translates, wholly or partly, many poems of Tagore beginning with *Sandhya Sangeet* through 'Sagara Tarang', 'Ahalye', 'Urvashi', to *Kanikaa*, and gives brief plot-outlines of Tagore's stories, novels and plays.

In the last chapter of this work, Masti describes in detail not only the holy environment of Santiniketan (in which, the students began their day with the prayers chosen from the Vedas, such as *Om, pita no hasi, pita no bodhi*), but also gives a vivid picture of Tagore's seventieth birthday celebrated in Santiniketan on Friday 8 May 1931. Masti, with great reverence, records the different Veda mantras chanted at that time (and also gives their meaning in Kannada), and goes on to talk about the great paintings presented

on that occasion by reputable painters of China and Japan. In the end, he gives a translation of the address Tagore delivered on that day. The speech begins with these words: 'Today, standing on the last stage of my life, I have to move ahead wondering what I am'; and ends with these famous lines: 'I am a being living on love. I am a worshipper of Beauty, a frenzied dancer in joy, a singer lost in melody, a poet. These are the words born of my experience of 70 years. I am nothing else.' (This is a translation from Kannada as given by Masti in Kannada.)

Odeyar D. Heggade's work *Visvakavi Ravindranatha Tagore* (1993) gives equal attention to the poet's life, his works and ideology. Since this work is a continuation of Heggade's work on modern Indian thought, he discusses in detail Tagore's aesthetics, his approach to education, music and painting, and his attempts to bring together Eastern and Western thought.

The most important critical work on Tagore's works and ideology is *Ravindra Prasasti* (1962), a collection of critical articles brought out to commemorate the centenary celebrations of Tagore, edited by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar. The collection contains 23 studies on the works of Tagore, including his paintings and *Rabindra Sangit*. Almost all the eminent writers and scholars of that period including S. K. Ramachandra Rao, Sriranga, L. S. Seshagiri Rao, and V. K. Goal have contributed to this critical anthology.

To cite instances of major critical insights in the articles in this collection, Ramachandran Rao, discussing *Rabindra Sangit*, traces it to the influence of 'baul music' popular in Bengal; Sriranga (himself a great playwright), discusses the aspects of music and dance in Tagore's plays, and defends the plays against the charge that they are plays of ideas; Seshagiri Rao argues that Tagore's fiction is as important as Tagore's poetry, and that among Tagore's novels, the most successful ones are *Chaturanga* and *Gora*; A. N. Subbarao, a well-known art critic, points out that as a painter

Tagore chose the middle path between purely symbolic Ajanta style and totally realistic Western style, and he finds a metaphysical wave in Tagore's paintings; while discussing the relationship between Sanskrit literature and Tagore, C. K. Venkataramaiah analyses the play *Raja* as a metaphysical allegory, dramatizing the *Upanishadic* distinction between individual soul and the universal soul.

Kuvempu (Dr K. V. Puttappa, the first Jnanapith awardee in Kannada), has written an important article on Tagore entitled 'Kavi Ravindraru', in which he makes a significant, if debatable, point on Tagore as poet. According to Kuvempu, Tagore was a great poet but not an epic poet (Kuvempu's words are *sreshtha kavi* and *maha kavi*). Kuvempu argues that because Tagore disregarded ancient myths except for one or two, he could not grasp the spirit of the nation in the sense that Homer and Vyasa could. In other words, Tagore lacked mythopoeic vision and hence cannot be considered a *maha kavi* like Valmiki and Vyasa.

From the available accounts of the early decades of the last century, it appears that among all the critical essays of Tagore, the essay 'Kavye Upekshita' (in *Prachin Sahitya*) had a great impact on early Kannada writers. As is well-known, in that particular essay, Tagore draws our attention to certain women characters like Urmila in the *Ramayana*, Anasuya and Priyamvada in *Sakuntala*, and Patralekha in *Kadambari*, undeservedly marginalized by the texts. Tagore points out that Urmila in particular deserves our admiration and reverence as much as Sita does. It is worth speculating if this critical essay was responsible for the later epics in Kannada, in which the characters of Urmila and Lakshmana, and other minor characters in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are given more attention and importance by Kuvempu, Masti and Moily in their re-interpretations of the classics.

Reminiscences and Memoirs

Many Kannada writers visited Santiniketan and met Tagore in the 1920s. Tagore visited Bangalore in 1918 and Mysore in 1920, in the course of his tour of southern states in order to raise funds for Santiniketan. It is said that during this tour, when Tagore stayed in Bangalore for three days in 1918, he completed his novel *Sesher Kabita*. Many writers have reminisced about those visits, the way people responded to him, and the speeches Tagore delivered then. As an instance, we may consider reminiscences of the famous economist-poet V. Seetharamaiah (popularly known as VC), in his work *Smrutichitra Samputa* (Portraits from Memory, 1997).

During 1918, VC was a student of Maharaja's college; and, when he came to know of Tagore's visit to Bangalore, he and his friends were enthralled. With his friends, VC went to Bangalore, participated in the public function, and was overjoyed. Later, in 1920, he met Tagore during his visit to Mysore. He documents in detail what his feelings were and what Tagore said on that occasion. Here are a few excerpts from his long account:

A huge pandal was put up in front of S. L. N. High School; and they had hung a big and colourful portrait of Tagore, which, in the light beamed from behind it, shone resplendent. The people in charge of such lighting-marvels were N. N. Iyengar and D. V. Ayya. They had tied a round flower vase at a height, and it would be activated through electricity. When Tagore stood on the dais, the vase opened and rained flower-petals on him. Tagore's dress and his voice both were very pleasing. His first lecture was on 'The Message of the Forests.' The second day, at Lalbagh, he read a scene from a short play called *The Mother's Prayer*; and it took us, emotional adolescents, to an entirely new world. In those days, Bengal was in the forefront of India in every field. Bengali names would thrill us ... During such a period, we deemed it our good fortune that Tagore, a man who had really achieved

international repute, who, by birth, scholarship, appearance, culture, and literary creations had brought prestige and honour to our country, deigned to visit our state, Karnataka.

...

When he visited Mysore, in 1919 or 1920, he spoke at our college also; and all of us, students and members of the staff, took photographs with him...On the second day in Mysore, at Nishatbag, under a huge tree by the side of a lake, Tagore read a short play by name *Karna and Kunti*.

Tagore's ... simplicity and the situation really made that a memorable experience. The Duryodhana-Gandhari episode in Mother's Prayer, which he had read out in Bangalore, was tragic; and what he read out here, the mother and son meeting – of Kunti and Karna – was equally tragic. We were all deeply moved.

...

With great difficulty, we had succeeded in getting permission to meet Tagore in the evening... As soon as we entered the inner chamber, the great poet greeted us, asked us to sit, and he also sat on a sofa facing us. We had carried with us flowers, two packs of golden coloured choice betel leaves (for which Mysore was famous in those days), almonds, aromatic betel-nut pieces, and a dozen oranges – all laid out on a silver platter kept inside a cane-box. We lit sandal sticks, garlanded the poet, prostrated before him, and gave him the cane box. No sooner did he open the box than the delicate aroma of the betel leaves and flowers must have touched him. When we put the garland round his neck and offered the bouquet in his hands, he must have felt happy. 'Beautiful flowers – marvellous flowers; some of the finest I have worn; you have brought me joy, joy!' he said. He sniffed the flowers many times, took them to his eyes twice, and hugged each one of us who weren't tall enough to reach his shoulders. The interview, scheduled for ten minutes, extended up to 45 minutes.

He explained the tune of one of his poems. In the Town Hall, it was *Bhuvana mana mohini*; here it was *Suuli phul*. The joy, the ecstasy that we experienced in those days is something registered deep within our hearts, never to be forgotten.

In short, the way Kannada writers and artists viewed Tagore during the *Navodaya* or the first half of the twentieth century, may be summed up in the words of B. M. Srikanthaiah (popularly known as BMSHree). In his introduction to Masti's book on Tagore, BMSHree states:

Sri Thakur is an ideal not only for India but for the whole world. The great mission he undertook throughout his life was to critically understand the ethics, culture and civilization of both the East and the West, to fuse them without pride or prejudice, and to guide the world with that knowledge... *Visva, bharati, santi* (world, wisdom, peace) –these three terms sum up his life. In peace and tranquillity, one should acquire wisdom from the Goddess Sarasvati, should purify prevalent knowledge and information, establish universal brotherhood, and then should strive so that everyone in this world purifies his soul through pursuits of ethics and arts and finally lives a life of happiness and contentment. This was what Tagore taught every one and this was his noble message.

Above anything else, what the biographies and reminiscences of Tagore in Kannada record again and again is the fact that Tagore's getting the Nobel prize instilled national pride among all writers of the time and, in a way, strengthened the national struggle for freedom. Many felt that Indian writers would no longer be looked down upon as (in Tagore's words) pickers of food from the dustbins of others. The desperate need of such national pride among the writers of the colonial period can never be exaggerated.

Before I conclude, I have to add a qualifying note to what has been saying till now. It is an indisputable fact that in the first half

of the twentieth century, Tagore was greatly admired by Kannada writers as a gifted poet-playwright-novelist, and was revered as a sage who had built Santiniketan as a pilgrimage for all writers and thinkers. However, if we consider the new dimensions given to Kannada literature and newer channels of expression opened, Kannada literature owed more to Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Saratchandra Chatterjee. Translations of Bankim's novels, especially *Anandamath* and *Durgesnandini*, were responsible to a great extent for the introduction of a new literary form in Kannada which came to be called *Kadambari* (equivalent of the term 'novel'). One of the early translators of Bankim, B. Venkatacharya, has this to say in his English preface to his translation of *Durgesnandini* (1885): 'A novel in the sense in which it is understood in English is not familiar to the Kanarese-speaking public. I was therefore induced to undertake the translation of the present work, which is a novel by the well-known Bengali novelist of the day – Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.' Translations of the novels of Saratchandra, especially *Devdas* and *Sesh Prasna*, gave rise to domestic novels which continued to be popular almost throughout the century. Above all, an impact stronger than Bankim, Tagore and Premchand was exerted on Kannada literature by English writers – nineteenth-century British Romantic poets, Walter Scott's fiction, Shakespeare's drama. The reasons are obvious. During the colonial period one looked up to the rulers first and accepted what was held as models by the masters. Besides, Kannada (or other Indian) writers could read and appreciate English literature directly, whereas they had to depend on translations for Bengali or Hindi literature. Even today, though there is much change, the literatures of India do not seem to have totally turned away from its Westward gaze.

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শান্তিনিকেতন ক
উপনিষৎসংগ্রহ
অর্বাং
প্রথম প্রদান উপনিষৎ হইতে সংগৃহীত
মহাবাক্যানিচয়
মূল-অঙ্কুরের সহিত
ত্রিবিধুশেখর ভট্টাচার্য্য
বিরচিত
সরল সংস্কৃত ব্যাখ্যা ও বঙ্গানুবাদ
প্রথম খণ্ড
শ্রীরবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর
সম্পাদিত
বৈশাখ, ১৩১৭

Title-page of *Upanishatsangraha*, vol.1,
translated from the Sanskrit with
a commentary by Bidhusekhar
Bhattacharya, and edited by
Rabindranath Thakur (1910)

समाज ।

श्रीयुत रवीन्द्रनाथ ठाकुर
कृत

बंगला पुस्तक का हिन्दी अनुवाद ।

Title-page of the Hindi translation
of *Samaj* (1913)

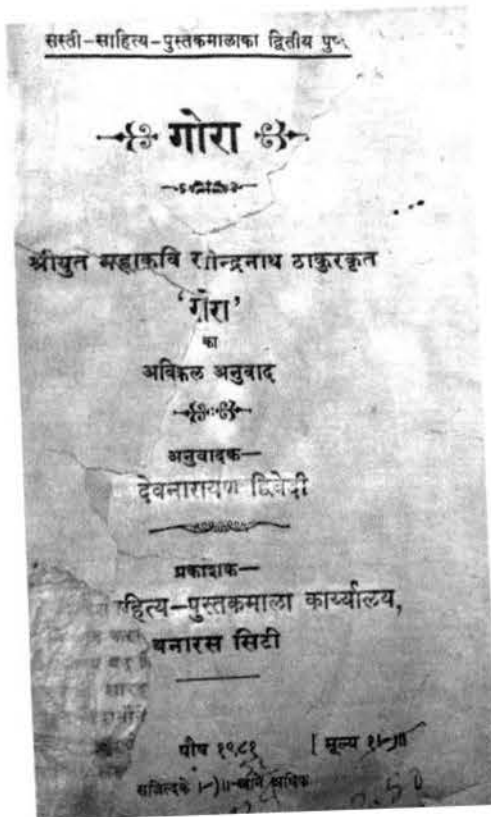
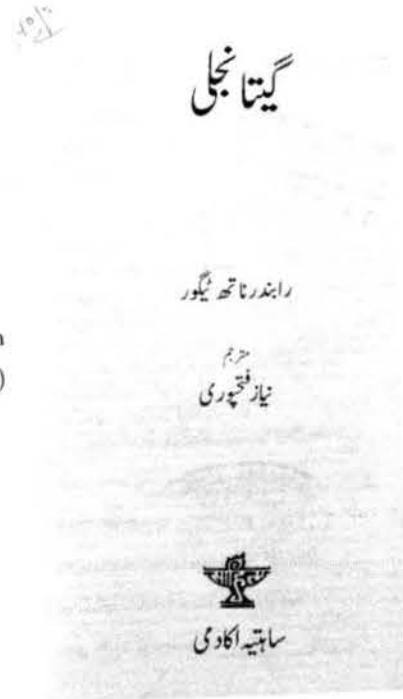
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श्रीयुत बद्रीनाथ वर्मा, एम. ए., काठ्यतीर्थ ।

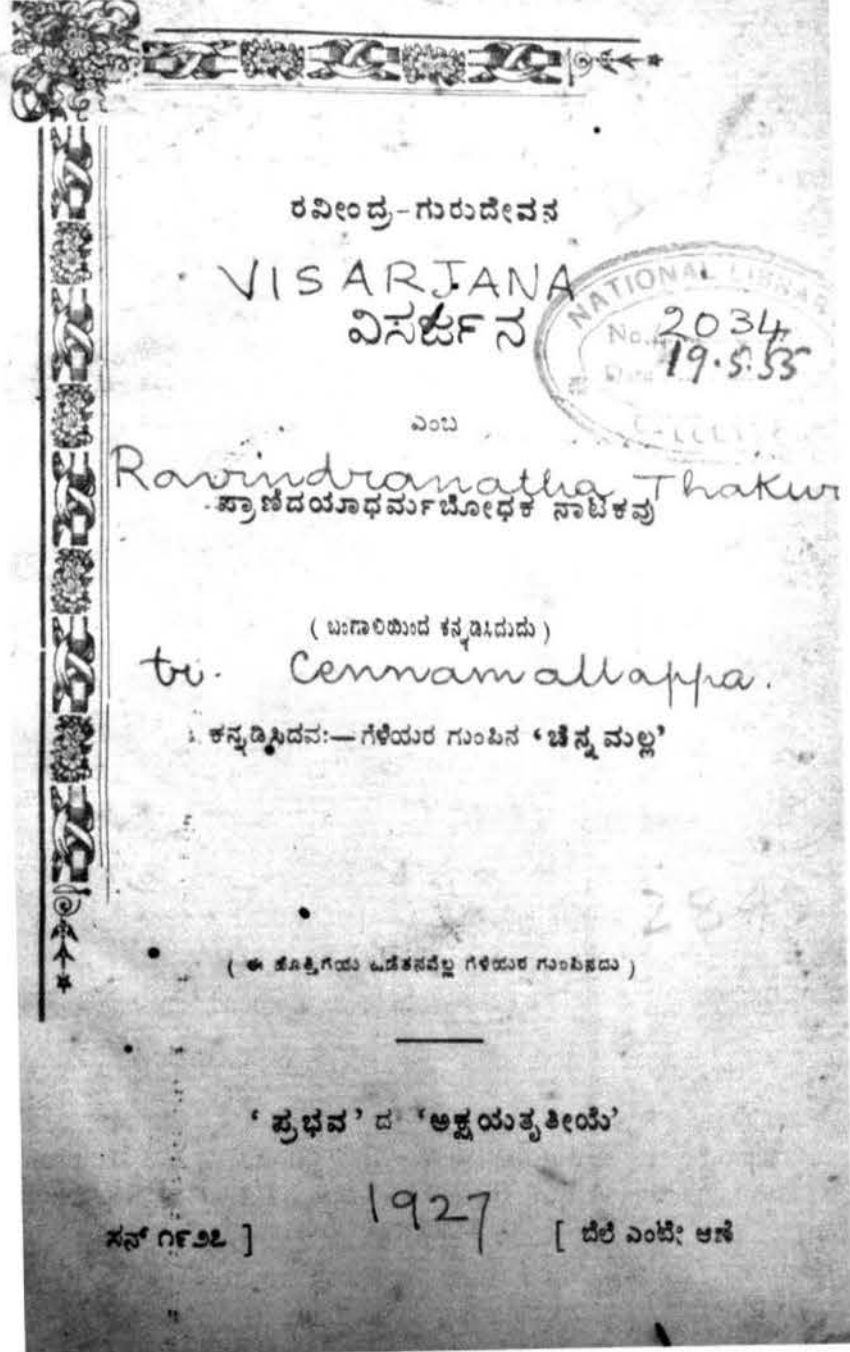
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लौकना न प्रबारी ।



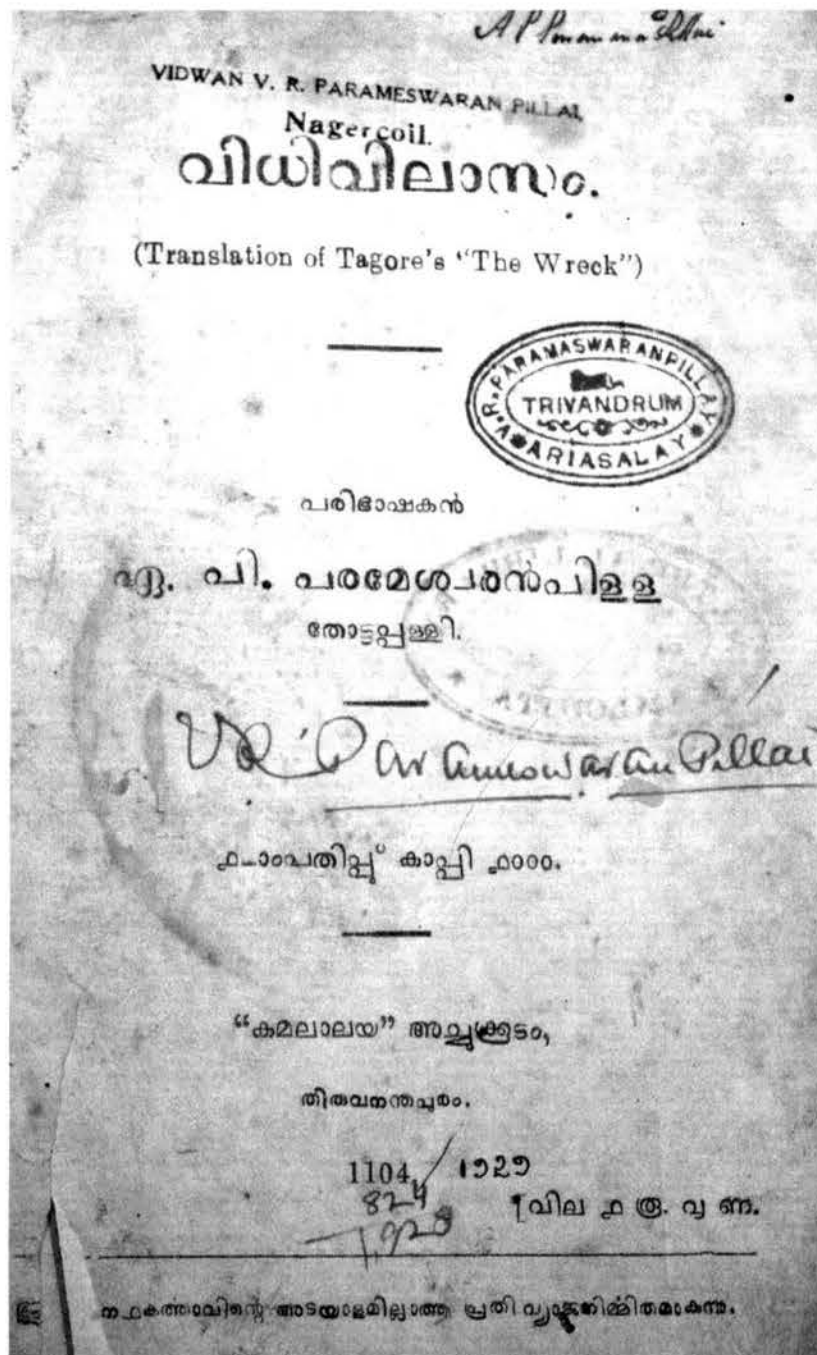
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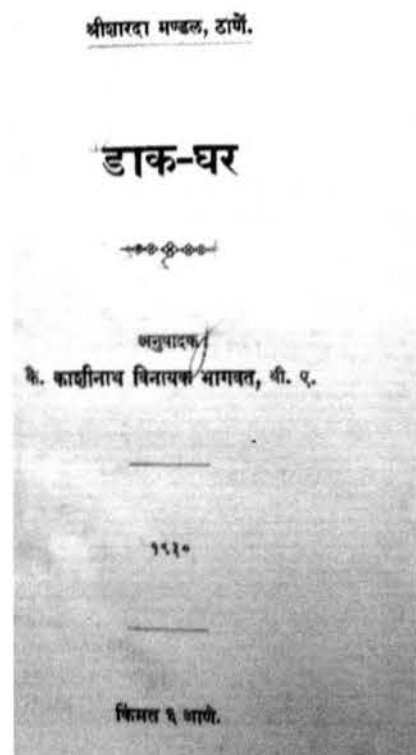
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of *Gora* (1924)



Title-page of the Kannada translation of *Visarjan* (1927)

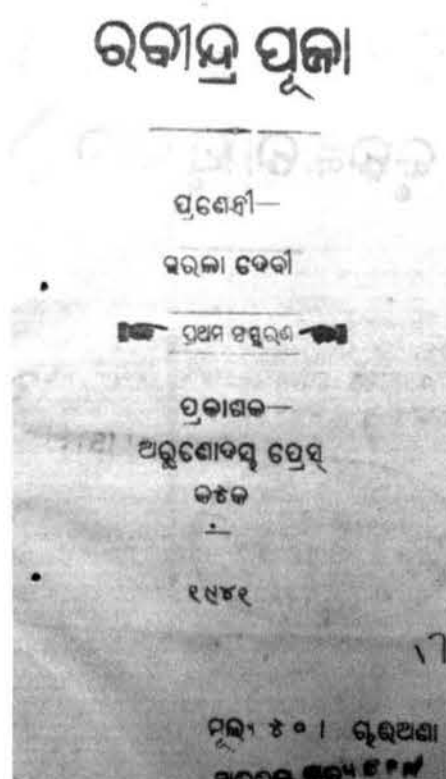


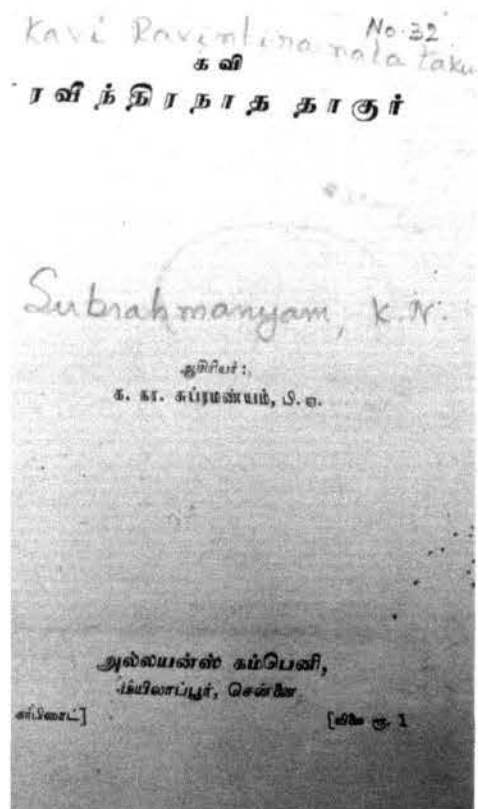
Title-page of the Malayalam translation of *The Wreck* (1928)



Title-page of the Marathi translation of *Dakghar* (1930)

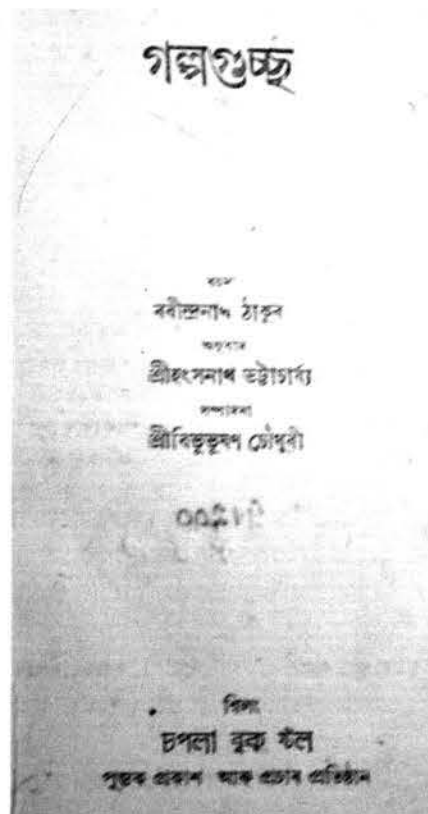
Title-page of Sarala Debi's Odia book *Rabindra Puja* (1941)





Title-page of the Tamil book
Kavi Ravindranath Thakur by
K. S. Subramanyam* (1941)

Title-page of the Asamiya translation
of *Galpaguchchha* (1950)



గాంధారి

రవీంద్రనాథ్ ఠాకూర్

అనుకృతి
ఉత్పల సత్యనారాయణాచార్య

ప్రకాశకులు :
డి. వేంకటేశ్వర అండ్ కో., గుడివాడ

Title-page of the Telugu translation of *Gandhari* (1950)

THE IMPACT OF TAGORE ON MALAYALAM LITERATURE

R. SURENDRAN

The Poet-Trio in Malayalam

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) won accolades all over the world as a modern emissary of Indian thought and culture. His literary contributions paved the way for many Western readers into the Vedas and Upanishads. Tagore was against conservatives unwilling to acknowledge the achievements of the West. His literary perception enabled him to join the ancient and the modern. He believed that ancient values were to be cherished in the modern world, and his works proclaim this faith.

‘Indian literature’ is a familiar concept in the modern world, but it hardly had a presence in the pre-Independence era. Even at that period, Tagore was acknowledged as a colossal figure. People started learning Bengali and English to read his works, and his works were, in turn, translated into different Indian languages.

Malayalam, the language of Kerala, the southernmost state

of India, registered the greatness of Tagore's poetic genius in many ways. The influence of Tagore's works is imprinted in Malayalam literature through the translations of Poothezhath Raman Menon, P. Unnikrishnan Nair, G. Sankara Kurup, K. C. Pillai, Balamani Amma and the studies made by Professor Gupthan Nair and Professor Thayattu Sankaran. Tagore's contributions to different literary genres have been acknowledged by eminent Malayalam critics such as Professor N. Krishna Pillai, N. V. Krishna Warriar, Professor Sukumar Azhikode, C. P. Sreedharan, G. Sankara Pillai, N. E. Balaram and K. Jayakumar.

While Mahatma Gandhi dominated Indian political life, Tagore was the major source of the reputation of India's literature. Both stalwarts had mutual respect, and historians have recorded several instances of this great relationship.

The poetic genius of Tagore and that of the poet-trio of Malayalam literature flowered almost at the same time. Kumaran Asan, Ulloor. S. Parameswara Iyer and Vallathol Narayana Menon devoured the works of Tagore and were hugely inspired by him. They were destined to meet him in person, and their bonding with Tagore is an instance of the strengthening of a cordial relationship between the two languages as well.

Kumaran Asan (1873–1924) in his poem *Prarodanam* pays tribute to Tagore. Critics are of the opinion that, seventy seventh *sloka* of the poem glorifies Tagore's literary prowess. It was published in 1919, at a time when the spirit of national integration, was foundering. Asan devoted two other poems, *Divyakokilam* in Malayalam and *Swagathapanchakam* in Sanskrit to commemorate Tagore's visit to Kerala in 1922. Tagore's play *Chandalika* and Asan's poem *Chandalabhikshuki*, although dealing with the same idea from two different perspectives, conveyed the same lament over the loss of humaneness in our society. Asan's poem was in print a year before the publication of Tagore's play *Chandalika*.

Ulloor. S. Parameswara Iyer (1877–1949), another eminent

member of the trio, also adored Tagore. Both Tagore and Ulloor re-told the ancient myths and legends, and made creative use of the Upanishads. Ulloor was assigned to dedicate a *Mangala Pathra* in English in honour of Tagore when the latter visited Kerala, and he made excellent use of the chance to declare his admiration for Tagore.

Ulloor refers to Gandhiji, Bose and Tagore as ascetic, teacher and ideal poet in 'Ente Matham' (My Religion), a poem in the anthology *Tharangini*. He also construed them as the epitomes of *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*. Later on, he conferred on them the images and significance of *satyam*, *sivam*, and *sundaram*. At the end of the poem, Ulloor refers to them as the trio of India's political movement. There are good reasons to believe that the Bose referred to here is the scientist Jagadis Chandra Bose, and not Subhas Chandra.

Tagore and Vallathol Narayana Menon (1879–1958) were two eminent literary figures of national movement who inspired and energized the masses towards India's freedom struggle. The massacre at Jalianwala Bagh deeply disturbed the poet. He showed his resentment by returning the honour of knighthood bestowed on him by the British government. The government had also decided to honour Vallathol during the Prince of Wales's visit in 1922. He refused to accept the royal honour, stating that he was not ready to receive any honour from a government which has put his guru Mahatma Gandhi behind bars.

Vallathol visited Santiniketan in 1939 which paved the way for the establishment of Kerala Kalamandalam. Kerala Kalamandalam is a unique institution in which all the art forms of Kerala come under one roof. Vallathol's association with Tagore most certainly enriched the idea of setting up an institution to foster the traditional art forms. But while Vallathol concentrated on the indigenous art forms of Kerala, Tagore built Santiniketan to serve the educational needs of India as a whole. Tagore greatly

appreciated the aesthetic discrimination of Vallathol when he had a chance to watch a *kathakali* performance, the traditional art form of Kerala.

The poet-trio in Malayalam tried to restore the integrity of our nation through their poems, a nation in which caste and religion do not fragment India's unity. Tagore's concept of national integration was also on similar lines:

Let my nation rise above the narrow walls to the heaven of
freedom
Let the Almighty bless us to achieve.

It was Tagore's prayer to God. Today we have narrowed down our perspectives along lines of caste, religion and language. Natural resources such as rivers are also being disputed. National integration and cultural integrity are topics for discussion at seminars. Indian writers in different languages seldom exchange their views and share ideas. The cordial bond between Tagore and the poet-trio in Malayalam is a majestic instance of the lofty notion of India that can go with adulation for a great literary genius. Their friendship bears out the possibility of respecting and accepting the cultural heritage in the different languages of the country. The association of Tagore with the poet-trio in Malayalam is also evidence of the magnanimity of Malayalam, and its literature that had given unstinted praise to a poet in another Indian language.

After the Trio

Then a new generation of poets that followed the trio infused a new sensibility in their works. The prominent poets among them were G. Sankara Kurup, P. Kunhiraman Nair, Vailopilly Sreedhara Menon, Edassery Govindan Nair, Balamani Amma and Akkitham Achyuthan Namboodiri. Mysticism, worship of nature, spirituality and pantheism were some of the features in Tagore's poems. These Malayalam poets drew inspiration from these features. Some of the poets made efforts to translate their favourite poems from Tagore.

The ties between Malayalam and Bengali were strengthened through these efforts.

The translations of G. Sankara Kurup received wide acclaim among Malayalam readers. Tagore's works, especially his rendering of the message of the Vedas and Upanishads, energized Sankara Kurup's works. His essay entitled 'Pranam to Gurudev' deserves special mention. Sankara Kurup speaks of his astonishment in encountering the new elements in Tagore's poetry: 'I was resting as a traveller in the shades of trees. At this juncture this singer was showing me the new horizons. It was impossible to imitate his poetic diction. Tagore was offering humble invocations before the Creator. My heart was reciting those invocations in his indirect presence.' There was no doctrinal stamp of any particular religion: the poems had a universal appeal. For him nature was not a monotonous collection of inanimate objects. One and the same *jeevachaitanya* was flowing in the poet and nature. Excellent examples of this view can be seen in the works of Tagore. One is reminded of this by the anthology of poems *Odakkuzhal*, the magnum opus of G. (Sankara Kurup) that won the first Jnanpith award in 1965. G. later translated *Gitanjali*.

There are nearly 20 renderings of the *Gitanjali* in Malayalam. Some are in prose and others in verse. Some Malayalam writers were keen to learn Bengali to read and appreciate Tagore's works. The translations of G. and V. Unnikrishna Nair are the results of this effort. Other Keralites had the privilege to be students at Santiniketan. Sri K. C. Pillai and Dr V. S. Sharma translated *Gitanjali* into Malayalam (with transliteration). L. M. Thomas, Malesia Ramakrishna Pillai, K. Jayakumar and N. K. Dasam are other translators of *Gitanjali*. These translations enabled interested Malayalam readers to better appreciate Tagore's creative talent and sensibility. This process is still on. Poets such as Akkitham, Sugathakumari, O. N. V. Kurup, Vishnu Narayan Namboodiri, G. Kumara Pillai, Ayyappa Panikkar and Sachidanandan have drawn inspiration from Tagore. Dr Ayyappa Panikkar has edited a

book on Tagore and Kerala, which assesses Tagore's influence on different branches of Malayalam literature.

Critics of repute have written literary biographies of Tagore. Puthezath Rama Menon, S. Gupthan Nair, Thayat Sankaran and N. E. Balaram's works are held in high esteem. Some new trends such as the dalit movement, feminism and postmodernism are now dominating Malayalam literature. Caste, creed and Western influences are predominant in these trends, and most of these rely on fragmentation. The heritage, legacy and culture of India are subjected to stringent criticism by authors of these genres. The modernity as also the renaissance in Indian literature initiated by Tagore sought to rise above such fragmentation. The works of Tagore may still have the vigour to rejuvenate the values and virtues upheld by the ancient sages.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND CONTEMPORARY MARATHI LITERATURE

BIPLAB CHAKRABORTY

During the last phase of the nineteenth century there was a slow but steady increase in interaction among literatures in modern Indian languages. Writers made sincere attempts to know more about colleagues writing in other languages. Bengali and Marathi literature came in close contact at this juncture.

With the disintegration of the Maratha rule leading to the capitulation of the Peshawa's government to the British in 1818, there were signs of a new age that started to command respect. The Christian missionaries led the way in the spread of education. There was a demand created for a more systematic study of language as grammars and dictionaries were printed. Carey's *Grammar of the Mahratta Language*, the first printed book in Marathi, came out of the Baptist Mission Press at Srirampur in Bengal in 1805. The first biography in Marathi was published from Srirampur in 1818. This was a Marathi translation by Pandit Vaijanath Sarma of the Ramram Basu's Bengali book *Pratapaditya Charitra*.

The first novel in Marathi, *Jamuna Parjatan* by Baba Padmanji, was inspired by the controversy in Bengal during the second half of the nineteenth century centred on the remarriage of widows. Vishnusastry Pandit translated Vidyasagar's famous book on the question of widow-remarriage into Marathi, *Vidhavavivaha* (1865), and it created a stir in Maharashtra. Baba Padmanji added a *purbani* (an appendix) to *Jamuna Parjatan* with a newspaper clipping published from Kolkata containing a detailed description of the first widow-remarriage held there in 1856. B. H. Bhagwat based his book on the life of Raja Rammohan Roy (1858) on an article published in *Calcutta Review*. Many Marathi periodicals such as *Darpan* and *Prabhakar* were published hard on the heels of printed Bengali forerunners.

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was a growing ascendancy of Marathi prose over poetry. The process began with the establishment of Bombay Education Society and its subsequent invitation to Marathi writers for the publication of informative books either in original or in translation. As a result, a host of translations from English, Bengali and other Indian languages started to appear. During the period between 1874 and 1920, Bengali was the major source for translated books in Marathi. The total number of Bengali novels translated during this period was 59, while this number was 13 for Hindi, 5 for Gujarati, 2 for Urdu, and 1 for Tamil. Novels of Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rameshchandra Datta, and Prabhatkumar Mukherjee were at the top of the list. Plays of Dinabandhu Mitra, Jyotirindranath Tagore and Amritlal Basu were also included. Curiously, no book of Rabindranath Tagore, barring a few of his stories, appears to be present in it.

Readers of Marathi literature, however, were overwhelmed by stories of Rabindranath Tagore. Some of the stories appeared in translation in the pages of *Masik Manoranjan* at the turn of the nineteenth century. Gradually, as the spell of Tagore spread, more translations were attempted.

The influence of Rabindranath Tagore on contemporary Marathi literature may be studied under the following heads:

1. Marathi translations of Tagore
2. Marathi works based on Tagore
3. Marathi literature influenced by Tagore's thoughts and ideas
4. Literary portraits of Tagore in Marathi literature

Marathi Translations of Tagore

During the lifetime of Rabindranath Tagore various attempts were made to translate his works from Bengali into Marathi. In 1924, Sivaram Govind Bhawe translated Tagore's play *Muktadhara* (1922) into Marathi. A Marathi translation of the same play by K. L. Soman appeared in 1925. Years later, Mama Warerkar translated *Muktadhara* (1961). These translations of *Muktadhara* appear to be true to the original, though showing a marked difference in the choice of words. Mama Warerkar's translation is perhaps the most popular.

Tagore's *Dakghar* (1911), like *Muktadhara*, was translated by three different translators in Marathi. Kasinath Vinayak Bhagavat translated *Dakghar* in 1930. The same play was translated by Mama Warerkar in 1961, and Asoke Sahane in 1987. *Bisarjan* (1890) was first translated by Arjun Sitaram Keluskar in 1944. Another translation by G. K. Bhate under the title *Mate Tula Kay Havay* was brought out the same year. *Raktakarabi* (1926) was translated by Mama Warerkar in 1961 and was included in *Thakuranchi Nataka* published by Sahitya Akademi. In 1962, *Malini* (1896) was translated by D. L. Ajili and Sarojini Kamatanukar.

Warerkar, arguably the most successful translator of Tagore into Marathi, had three avowed aims. First, the original thoughts and ideas must be properly rendered. Secondly, work of translation must emulate the style of writing in the original. Thirdly, the translation must retain the simplicity of expression in the original.

Later translators tried their best to follow these goals.

Most of the novels, stories and poems of Tagore, including some of his prose writings were translated and made available in Marathi during his birth centenary and thereafter. Mama Warerkar translated *Gora*, *Ghare-Baire*, *Chaturanga*, *Char Adhyay* and other novels. *Gitanjali* was translated by B. B. Borkar and other translations followed. It seems in comparison that Marathi translators preferred plays of Tagore to his other writings.

Marathi Works based on Tagore

A number of Marathi writers were directly inspired by Tagore. For instance, Tagore's story 'Kabuliwala' has been a source of inspiration for many Indian writers. Hanumantarao More wrote a play based on 'Kabuliwala' in 1957. Yet another play based on 'Kabuliwala' was written by Narayan Sukla in 1961. In each case, the playwrights had to flesh out the story with their own inventions. In an interview published in *Forward* (23 February 1936) Tagore said:

The story was a work of imagination. Of course there used to be a kabuliwala who came to our house and who became very familiar with us. I imagined that he too must have a daughter left behind in his mother land to be remembered by him.

For dramatization of Tagore stories Marathi writers had to make the dramatic situation more graphic. The problem may be studied by looking at the dramatization of a different Tagore story. In 1977 Ranjan Purushottam Darvekar dramatized Tagore's 'Khokababur Pratyavartan' under the title *Lekure Iswarachi*. The play was staged at Dhanwate Rang Mandir in Nagpur in the same year (15 August). The changed title that the dramatist has conceived a new play based on the Tagore story. The return of the child in Tagore's story is conferred a new significance. There is no such *lekurwala* (someone having a son) in the sense indicated in the play. A child may be called a gift of god and the return of the child

may also be considered divine blessing.

'Khokababur Pratyabartan' is described in three sections. The first has a vivid description of how Raicharan, an old servant, fails to save the only son of Anukulbabu from the river Padma. In the second, Raicharan returns home to Felna, a son who is brought up by him. In the third section, Raicharan gifts his son to his old master at Barasat, and the latter believes Felna to be his own son who had been abducted by Raicharan.

Lekure Iswarachi is a play in two acts. The names of characters are changed. Raicharan is now Dhulichand, the servant. Anukulbabu, the master, is Subhasbabu and his unnamed wife who died at childbirth in the original story, appears in this story as Swapna. In 'Khokababur Pratyabartan' the story is set against the banks of Padma where Raicharan used to take the child in a baby stroller. Once Raicharan was distracted plucking flowers, and the child went out of the stroller and was drowned in the river.

In *Lekure Iswarachi* the story is presented in a different way. The opening scene is set in the sitting room of Dhulichand in his home at a village near Kolkata. Subhasbabu is seen visiting Dhulichand's village home. He is accompanied by Swapna, his wife, and Bablu, his only son, a child. The family is on holiday. Parvati, wife of Dhulichand, is an important character added to the play. Parvati argues in favour of her husband and makes it clear that Dhulichand can in no way be held responsible for the loss of the child. She says:

pan, me mahant kay beirmani keli ho tumhi? aplya nasibana te lekaru gelat ... ani tumcha kay dosh?

In the original story neither Raicharan's wife nor any other character had any occasion to declare Raicharan innocent. Moreover, Raicharan visits Anukulbabu and hands over his own son to him. In *Lekure Iswarachi* Dhulichand invites Subhasbabu to his country home and offers his only son Motha Nisiram as Nisibaba, the child he had stolen. He is also seen confessing his

guilt.

In 'Khokababur Pratyabartan' Raicharan said at the end of the story:

*ami je tomar chhele churi koriachilam se kebal bhagaban
janen prithibite aar keha jane na.*

In *Lekure Iswarachi* Dhulichand says:

Te cha nasiba techya pasi ahe.

Likewise Raicharan declared that all that happened was his fate (*amar adrishta*)

There is song at the beginning of the play like this:

*chal majha ghoda tik tik tik
dhabun ko hulu hulu dhal pa kisa
brik brik brik*

Although this song was not composed by Tagore, it has some relevance to the original story since Raicharan used to be the horse which the playful child loved to mount.

Marathi Literature influenced by Tagore's Thoughts and Ideas

A number of Marathi poets and writers were influenced by Tagore and his thoughts and ideas. Kasinath Hari Modak (1872-1916), popularly known as Madhavanuj, read *Gitanjali* in original and was deeply impressed, and was inspired to write poems in the same vein. Madhavanuj developed an early passion for poetry, and read works of Moropanth, Vaman Pandit and other Marathi poets. Later he read Byron, Tennyson, and Wordsworth and tried his hand as translator. He joined as a hospital assistant in 1894, but was forced to leave for Allahabad to recover from an illness. This proved to be a boon in disguise as he stayed with a friend named Madhav. Madhav lovingly taught Kasinath Bengali, and Kasinath preferred to be known as Madhavanuj (younger brother of Madhav). Madhavanuj became proficient in Bengali and translated works

other than Tagore's, such as passages from *Meghnadbadh Kavya* of Michael Madhusudan Datta. He was not satisfied with the first 1200 lines of *Meghnadbadh* that he translated into Marathi. Later he translated *Virangana Kavya* of Madhusudan Datta followed by the novel *Krishnakanter Will* (1900) of Bankimchandra Chatterjee. He was simply overwhelmed when he first came upon Tagore's *Gitanjali*

Meanwhile Madhavanuj earned poetic fame. He wrote a good number of poems expressing his love of nature and his concern for society in such works as *Kaal*, *Kirti ani bismriti*, *Murtikar*, and *Murti bhanjan*. He wrote a few in which *Gitanjali* was clearly the source of inspiration.

he san suman tu sattar ghei suduni
jael thamboti matee madhye padunee
jari mile naa jate sthan tujha sumaharee
nija kare dukhbunee deya eya swekaree

Any reader of this poem may be in confusion whether this is an adaptation or a translation of a poem from *Gitanjali*. This poem, according to Bhabanisankar Pandit, is attuned to the quiet and solemn temperament of Madhavanuj.

Some poems of Narayan Gupte, popularly known as Bee (1872-1947), bear the distinct mark of Tagore's influence. A sense of mystic longing reminds a reader of Tagore. The following lines of Bee recall a celebrated poem of Tagore:

akasachi ghare tayala prakashachi dware
grahamalancha bar adsari ga
 A reader is sure to be reminded of Tagore's song:
akash bhara surjya tara

A number of Marathi poets and writers translated *Gitanjali*. They include N. F. Karandikar, Mahajan and Vaisnav Deogirikar. Kakasaheb Kalelkar (Dattatreya Balkrishna Kalelkar, 1885-1981) was an active inspiration behind the publication of *Abhang*

Gitanjali by Rugvedi in 1928. Kakasaheb welcomed Tagore to the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad at Ahmedabad in 1920. He was a follower of Tagore and Gandhi and had spent a considerable time in Santiniketan and in Gandhiji's *asram*. *Abhanga-Gitanjali* is a unique book in this sense that it contains some poems from *Gitanjali* transformed into the form of the Marathi *abhang*. In a letter dated 9 October 1928 Tagore wrote:

I have been assured by some of my friends in Mumbai that *Abhanga-Gitanjali* written in Marathi by Mr. Rugvedi is likely to bring some of my poems closer to my readers in Maharashtra. I am especially glad to know from some source that the translation is based on a careful study of Bengali original, ensuring greater accuracy in the rendering of ideas contained in my poems.

It is evident that Tagore was happy with Rugvedi's work.

Literary Portraits of Tagore in Marathi Literature

Some Marathi writers produced writings on Tagore including critical appreciation, memoirs and travelogues. Anant Kanekar presented a fine literary portrait of Tagore in his dramatic work under the title of *Gurudevanchi Hank* in 1943. There is stress on the anti-fascist strain in Tagore's ideas in this representation.

In 1961 the Government of Maharashtra announced prizes worth Rs 5000 and 3000 each for the best two books written on Rabindranath Tagore. B. B. Borkar won the top prize for his book *Anandajatri Rabindranath: Sanskar ani Sadhana*. This was an important study of life and works of Tagore. There are other literary portraits of Tagore in Marathi such as *Rabindra Kavya Darsan* by Srikanta Gogot, *Rabindranath Tagore: Sahitya ani Kavya Bichar* by Acharya Bhagavat, *Adhunik Rashtra Kavi Rabindranath* by S. K. Kshirsagar, and *Rabindra Tridala* by Gopinath Talwalkar.

In 1980, P. L. Despande, an eminent writer and playwright,

delivered lectures on Rabindranath Tagore at Pune University. This was later published as *Rabindranath: Tin Byakhyane*. In his first lecture, *Rabindranathachi Rangabhumi*, Despande presented a portrait of Tagore as dramatist and man of the theatre. The second lecture, *Rabindranathachi Sara* studied Tagore the educator. It focuses on Tagore's philosophy of education and his experiments in Santiniketan. The third, *Rabindranath ani Me* was a literary sketch of Tagore based on Despande's experiences at Santiniketan. If 'Nirjharer Swapnabhanga', according to Despande, is an ineffable poem, so is Tagore's Santiniketan.

Tagore's poem in Despande's translation appears to be as simple as the original that follows:

*jivan jebha sukuni jato karunadhara houni ye
sakal madhuri lopuni jata gitasudha rasa houni ye*

Readers of this poem may recall the sonorous original poem:

jiban jakhan sukaye jay, karunadharay eso

It is evident that Tagore's influence on the people of Maharashtra and Marathi literature is widespread even to this day. But the traffic was not one-way. Tagore visited Maharashtra many times during his lifetime, right from his early years till his old age. Many of his works were composed in Maharashtra. He studied works of Marathi *sant* poets and enjoyed turning them into Bengali. The bridge that was built early between Tagore and Marathi literature remains unbroken.

THE IMPACT OF TAGORE ON NEPALI LITERATURE

HIREN ALLEY

The literary interaction of India and Nepal was based largely in Varanasi, the holy city of the Hindus. During the Rana regime in Nepal, because of the strict censorship of literary activities, writers used to go to Varanasi and live there. Another advantage was that there were printing presses. Even Kathmandu was not congenial to writers. Motiram Bhatta, a young poet, wrote and published *Bhanu Bhakta ko Jiwan Charita* (The Life of Bhanu Bhakta) from Varanasi. He was a close associate of the great Hindi writer Bharatendu Harischandra. Eventually Darjeeling was to emerge as a centre of Nepali literary activities. The scholars based in Darjeeling were actively writing to refine the Nepali language and develop its literature. Gangaprasad Pradhan (1853-1932), a Nepali Christian who translated the Bible into Nepali in 1876, wrote many pieces for children and Christian hymns, and established his own printing press. Later he edited and published a daily Nepali newspaper named *Gorkhay Khabar Kagaj*. The

scholars of Varanasi found the language of Pradhan colloquial and substandard. In turn, Pradhan criticized the language of Varanasi as a 'Kasi bhasha' or Sankritized one. This rivalry between them in respect of the standardization of the language continued for a long time.

A versatile writer, Parasmani Pradhan (1898-1986), wrote in every genre including grammar and dictionary, and contributed towards the enrichment of Nepali language and literature. The credit for the first phase of modern Nepali plays and novels also belongs to Varanasi. The first staging of a play in prose, *Atal Bahadur* (1907) by Pahalmansingh Swar (1878-1934), took place in Darjeeling. The standard history of the Indian response to Western literary impact written by Sisir Kumar Das has this to say on the beginnings of Nepali drama:

The Gorkha National Theatrical Party was founded in 1909 which gave an impetus to the dramatists to write original plays and also to translate plays from other languages. Hastalal Giri's *Kanjusko Dhan*, an adaptation from Amritlal Basu's *Krpaner Dhan* (Bengali adaptation of Moliere's *L'Avare*) was staged in 1910. This is the beginning of a fruitful encounter between Nepali and other Indian languages. There was a sudden spurt of translations from Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and, of course, English.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new trend was seen, especially in poetry. Dharanidhar Sarma Koirala (1893-1980) wrote on the theme of social awareness through education. He stressed that education should be imparted through one's own mother tongue, and that this was advocated by none other than Rabindranath Tagore. One of his poems runs as follows:

Maya ko bhramajal katnama bidhya thulo sadan,
Atnama ati sista posan dinay bidhya mitho bhojan,
Bidya ko awahelna jati garoye afai maray to buji
Ayow prem gari sabai jana mili bidhya parai pari!!

Later he published a book of poetry entitled *Naibedya*, a title probably suggested by Tagore's collection of verse of the same name. In his earlier volume entitled *Spandan*, Koirala had mostly written poems on patriotic themes and warned of social decay. He urged social awakening and nation-building based principally on Tagore's philosophy. On the whole, all this was under the influence of Tagore's sense of unity and *swadesi*. The hypocrisy and pretension of the West were attacked in the poems, as well as the greed and imperialism underlying the apparent splendour of their civilization.

The gifted Nepali poet Okiyuma Gwynne (1920-86) translated the English *Gitanjali* that was awarded the Nobel prize. Besides Gwynn, Tagore's lyrics were translated by four others in different versions. They were as Shankar Dev Pant, Khagendra Kumar Pradhananga, Lokeschandra Pradhan, and Tika Khati. The latest version has been translated and published by Remika Thapa on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Tagore being observed at Mangpu, Darjeeling. The fame of Tagore as a poet reached other parts of India only after he received the Nobel. He was read widely through these translations in the Nepali language, and admired by many who were not conversant with the Bengali language. Okiyuma Gwynn wrote poems, and published books entitled *Chitralekha* (1958), *Bhaw-Sambhad* (1961), *Anamika* (1965). He was influenced most by the part of Tagore. He also published 'The Drama' in English and the *Sunakhari*, an epic novel. In prose, Rupnarayan Sinha, a renowned writer of fiction, wrote a novel entitled *Bhramar* (Roamer) in new style and in refined language with Sanskritized words. He was well-versed in Bengali as he had studied in Scottish Church College of Kolkata. Novels such as *Chaturanga*, *Ghare Baire*, and *Gora* are found in Nepali. *Gora* was translated into Nepali by Iswar Baral, a famous critic in Nepali and former Chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu.

The renowned Nepali poet and dramatist Tulsi Bahadur Chettri was a voracious reader of Tagore in the original. He has

translated volumes of Tagore's poems. The influence of Tagore's *Karna-Kunti Sambad* inspired him to write a long epic poem, entitled *Karna Kunti*. M. B. Rai, a philosopher and a critic in Nepali, has translated some stanzas from its prologue as under:

Some noble deed, some virtuous act or something other
kind.
In what distinguishes man from creatures of another kind
Such an act alone can lend us enduring aspect
Even the ravages of time will hardly touch it.
Worthless is this life if not enriched by some noble deed
Born human but not doing a human's duty is really bad.
It was you who taught us the ever relevant lesson.
All of us should do something noble before we leave
the scene.

Tagore used to visit Darjeeling from time to time. He visited Kalimpong three times, and stayed at Gouripur House. He was in Mangpu for the last time in 1941. He wrote a few poems and letters while at Mangpu. A poem titled 'Camellia' was composed while staying at Surel Bungalow, perched on the beautiful hillock surrounded with forests just above Mangpu. His seventy-ninth birthday was celebrated at Mangpu in 1940. The local artists took part in the celebrations with *nawmati baja*, *marooni natch* and *dampu sello*. Gurudev was impressed, if not overwhelmed, by Nepali folk music and dance. His presence in the hills had a great impact on the local people, and on the writers' community in particular.

Almost all Nepali writers of the first few decades of the twentieth century drew inspiration from the writings of Tagore. Such writers include Indra Sundas, a brilliant prose writer who had translated the short stories of Tagore into Nepali, Siva Kumar Rai, Bhaichand Pradhan, Nilam Pradhan and many others. The poets who were most influenced by Tagore were Narendra Prasad Kumai, Narendra Thapa, and Lokes Chandra Pradhan. It would

be an immense help to the present generation of Nepali readers and writers if a project were undertaken to prepare a collection of Tagore's works in Nepali translation.

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IMPACT OF RABINDRANATH ON ODIA LITERATURE

K. C. BHUYAN

Connection of the Thakur Family with Odisha

The surname of the Thakur family was once 'Kushari'. The Kusharis were inhabitants of Baropara of Jessore, now in Bangladesh. Nilmani Thakur, son of Ramjay Thakur, went to Cuttack in 1765 with the job of a *seristadar*. He earned plenty of money and built a residence at Jorasanko in Kolkata popularly known as 'Jorasanko Thakurbari' in 1784. He died in 1791. His grandson Prince Dwarakanath Thakur (1794-1846) had purchased the Pandua estate in the then Cuttack district of Odisha in 1840. A bungalow was also built by Dwarkanath in Tulsipur of Cuttack. After the sudden demise of Dwarakanath his son Debendranath (1817-1905) took over the management of the estate and went to Pandua for inspection. He also visited Cuttack and Puri during this time. As a pioneer in the field of education and the Brahmo reform movement his contribution was remarkable. He donated two thousand and five hundred rupees for Ravenshaw Degree College

and built the Brahmo Samaj Prayer Hall in Odia Bazar of Cuttack.

Jyotirindranath, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Balendranath, Rathindranath and others from the Thakur family were regular visitors to Odisha. Jyotirindranath was an eminent dramatist and wrote some of his plays while staying in Cuttack. Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, two great artists, painted a few of their works in Puri. Balendranath wrote on artistic and philosophical essays on Konark and other temples of Odisha. His premature death was a great loss to Bengali literature. Patharpuri, the beach home of the Thakurs in Puri, was surrounded by natural beauty which inspired the artists and writers of the family. Chintamani Mahapatra, Giridhari Mahapatra and Sridhar Mahapatra of Puri were skilled sculptors in stone, marble and wood. They came in touch with Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, the founders of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts. The Thakurs invited the Mahapatras to join the Society, and produce their work under its banner. These are preserved in art galleries in India and in collections abroad.

Rabindranath in Odisha

A few months after his return from England in 1890, Rabindranath was put in charge of the management of the estate of Pandua in Odisha and north central Bengal. While in the management charge of the estates for about six years he came in close contact with both the rural and urban life, which was a major influence on his writing. In 1875, when Debendranath was in charge of the estate, Rabindranath had accompanied his father to Cuttack. They stayed in the bungalow built by Dwarakanath in Tulsipur. In a meeting of writers and intellectuals at the bungalow, Rabindranath, then a boy of only 14 years, read out his poem 'Prakritir Khed' (lament of nature). The poem won appreciation from the distinguished audience. This news was reported in an Odia weekly, *Utkal Dipika* on 29 May 1875. The weekly, published

from Cuttack, reported the event under the caption 'Vidvatjana Samagam'. Later, it was published in the Bengali *Tattwabodhini Patrika* (June 1875).

In 1891, at the age of 30, Rabindranath represented his father when he went to inspect the estate at Pandua. From Kolkata to Pandua he travelled by steamer, country boat and palanquin. He described his bitter-sweet experience of the journey in the letters to his niece Indira Debi. During his stay at Pandua he had heard the recital of the episode of Arjun and Chitrangada of *Mahabharata* by the people in the village shrine. This would inspire him to write the lyrical drama *Chitrangada*.

His next visit to Pandua accompanied by his nephew Balendranath was in 1893. After inspection of the estate he toured Cuttack, Puri and Bhubaneswar. This time he spent about two months in Odisha. His letters written from Cuttack on 10.2.1893, 17.2.1893, 25.2.1893, 27.2.1893, from Balia on 28.2.1893, 1.3.1893, from Puri on 14.2.1893, and from Tiran on 4.3.1893 reveal many interesting and pleasant aspects related to nature, culture, religious practices, transport options, the high handedness of the British, and the innocence of the people. The poet was profoundly moved at the sight of the lined up coconut, mango, banyan and palms on both sides of the road, beautiful scenes of the countryside, the dance of squirrels, the fragrance of flowers, the call of birds, the roaring waves of the sea, the sweet breeze, vast open landscapes, the starry sky, and the moonlit night. On his way from Pandua to Cuttack he had to spend two days in the boat because of the cold and stormy weather. Drawing inspiration from nature, he composed three poems in two days. Those three poems were 'Anadrita' (neglected), 'Nadipathe' (on the river) and 'Deul' (temple). Among other poems he composed during his stay in Odisha were 'Bisvanritya' (dance of the universe) and 'Samudrer Prati' (ode to the sea). He had also started writing his book *Sadhana* before leaving Cuttack. He came to Odisha for the last time in the middle of 1896 to supervise the management of the

estate. This time the poet wrote his famous play *Malini*.

The estate was divided by Debendranath, and the management of the Pandua estate devolved on the sons of Debedranath's nephew Gunendranath. Rabindranath stopped visiting Pandua. Biswanath Das, Chief Minister, Odisha (then Prime Minister) met Rabindranath in Calcutta in 1939 and invited him to Odisha as a state guest. The poet gratefully responded to the invitation. During the conversation, the poet said to Das: 'I belong also to Odisha. I entertain goodwill, love and affection for the people of Odisha, so I am closely watching the political development of Odisha.'

He came to Odisha in the third week of April 1939 as state guest. He left Puri in the second week of May. During his stay he composed three poems: 'Prabasi' (the outsider), 'Janmadin' (birthday) and 'Epare Opare' (this side and that). He wrote about nineteen poems in Odisha, a few of them important ones.

Influence of Rabindranath on Odia Literature

Rabindranath's writings have had an abiding appeal in Odisha, and readers have still not turned away from him. With the spurt in translations, readers, critics and writers are returning to his works with renewed interest. He is still as important as he was a hundred years back to the writers and readers of Odisha.

The idea of Visva-Bharati, the university founded by him, included the idea of a meeting of people from across the world in a common fellowship of learning and a common spiritual striving for the unity of the human race. He intended it to be a centre of all round education. Although an open air school at Sakshigopal in Puri district was opened by Gopabandhu Das after the pattern of Fergusson School in Pune, it was also similiar to Visva-Bharati in idea and purpose. After his visit to Visva-Bharati, Gopabandhu wrote an editorial in his journal *Satyabadi*. The piece, published in 1919, is evidence of his appreciation of the system of education

introduced by the poet. Moreover, he praised the Vedic system of education which according to him continued to be the backbone of the Indian cultural heritage as witnessed in Santiniketan.

During his visit to Cuttack in 1893, the poet, staying as a guest of B. L. Gupta District and Sessions Judge, attended the Brahmo Samaj prayer meeting at Odia Bazar. Here he met one of the prominent figures of modern Odia literature, Bhaktakabi Madhusudan Rao. Before the meeting a translated poem of Madhusudan under the caption 'Rishichitra' was published in the Bengali periodical *Nabya Bharat*. Rabindranath's view on the poem was published in the Bengali journal *Sadhana*. According to the poet, 'a poem of this form and classical taste was not written in Bengali'. Madhusudan visited Santiniketan as a guest of Rabindranath in 1911. Madhusudan wrote in his diary: 'Had a talk with our host about Bengali grammar and some literary and religious matters. Listened to some hymns of Rabibabu's sung by Dinendrababu. Rabibabu is no mere poet and writer. He has become a true saint. His humility and faith, his single-hearted devotion to the work of Brahmacharyasram, his simple beautiful life impressed me as few lives have done.' (9.3.1911) Both Rabindranath and Madhusudan were believers. To Rabindranath God was a creator, and to Madhusudan a saviour. Nevertheless, spirituality had a crucial role in the work of both poets. Critics note a distinct influence of Rabindranath on *Chhandamala*, a collection of poems by Madhusudan.

As a state guest Rabindranath stayed in the circuit house at Puri. The day before his birthday the women of Odisha led by Sarala Debi, an eminent leader and writer, and Malati Chowdhury, a student of Santiniketan, felicitated him. On his birthday, writers, intellectuals and artists of Odisha chanted Vedic hymns, marked his forehead with sandal-paste and vermilion, offered him flowers and a filigree casket. They also read out poems. Kalindicharan Panigrahi and Chandrasekhar Das recited their poems which were praised by Rabindranath. Later on Panigrahi's poem 'Rabindra Bandana'

was published in the literary journal *Utkal Sahitya*. Referring to the occasion Prabhat Mukhopadhyay, an eminent biographer, wrote: 'At the end the poet expressed his satisfaction and gratitude for the cordial reception which was accorded to him. In his speech he said that he had been warmly received in many countries of the world, but the reception which was given that day by the people of Orissa had touched his heart, as it was according the traditional Hindu style. He would always cherish, he said, the memory of that welcome so spontaneously accorded by the people of Orissa.'

The poet was also felicitated on 28 April 1939 by the Raja of Puri. As Rabindranath was ill, the felicitation was restricted to a limited audience. The *diwan* came to circuit house in a procession, and the poet was felicitated in a traditional style. The chief priest presented a *pugree*, a pair of silk clothes on behalf of the Raja, and read out the citation addressed to the poet. The citation said, 'You are not only a poet of our country, you are a poet of the world. You are honoured both in East and West for your unparalleled and timeless literary works. We are proud and grateful to you, and bestow upon you the title of 'Param Guru'. The citation is preserved in Santiniketan.

Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godabarish Misra and others of the *Satyabadi* group of writers were nationalists in bent. Their literature stressed social reforms, moral improvement and economic development of the country. In spite of having great respect for the poet, they were not really influenced by the writings of Rabindranath.

Annadasankar Ray, Kalindicharan Panigrahi, Baikunthanath Pattanayak, Saratchandra Mukherjee, and Harihar Mahapatra, the writers of *Sabuj Yug* (green era), were strongly influenced by Rabindranath. Some of them, of course, did not admit having borrowed the word *sabuj* from Pramathanath Chaudhuri or Rabindranath. But critics suspect that the *sabujites* had imported the word *sabuj* from *Sabuj Patra*, a literary journal founded by Pramathanath Chaudhuri and from the poems of Rabindranath.

The word *sabuj* was a slogan to stir up the youth of the country for all that was inert, soulless and moribund. *Sabuj* is a symbol of youthfulness in Rabindranath's poetry. The *sabujites* in Odia literature brought out a collection of poems called *Sabuj Kabita*. The collection of poems, essays and letters, of Annadasankar is called *Sabuj Akshar*. Baikunthanath Pattanayak, one of the important poets of the age, wrote a satirical poem titled 'Sabuj Pari', also the title of a poem by Annadasankar which was part of his *Parimahala*. Sabuj Sahitya Samiti, a frontal organization formed by them, published other works. Some of the *sabujites* knew Rabindranath. The writers of *Sabuj Yug* were active from 1920 to 1935 and thereafter they chose their own career paths.

After *Sabuj Yug* the major poet to be influenced by Rabindranath was Sachi Routray, a Jnanpith awardee. One traces the influence of poems such as 'Sadharan Meye' and 'Khoyai' of Rabindranath in Sachi Routray's work. Routray also followed Rabindranath as his model in writing free verse and in the use of the rhetoric of youthful exuberance. Radhamohan Gadanayak, a contemporary of Sachi Routray, was closer to Rabindranath's models in his composition of free verse.

In 1935-6, Rabindranath was expected to attend a conference in Cuttack as chief guest in response to an invitation of Utkal Sahitya Samaj and Utkal Sangeet Samaj. But at the last moment the programme was unable to attend the meet. Mayadhar Mansingh, an eminent poet and critic, had written a poem entitled 'Rabindranath' to be read on the occasion. The poem was published later in *Sahakar*, a famous literary magazine before the poet's Odisha visit in 1939. Nabakisore Das, a lesser known poet, had written a beautiful poem named 'Rabindra Bandana' on the occasion of the poet's last visit. Nabakisore offered his love, devotion and tribute to the guest. At the age of 22, Annadasankar had visited Santiniketan for the second time when Rabindranath was in South America. He wrote an essay titled 'Santiniketan' after his return. The long essay was published in *Sahakar* in 1925.

Odia articles published on Rabindranath, the translations of his literary works in periodicals and in book form after the Nobel award, or before and after his death, or during his centenary year are not yet correctly listed. A list of Odia books translated from Rabindranath and books on him are given below:

Books	Year of Publication
Translated / Authored	
<i>Gitanjali</i>	1914
Translation	
<i>Dui Bon</i>	1950
Translation	
<i>Rabindra Galpa Chayan</i> (selected stories)	1951
Translation	
<i>Russiar Chithi</i>	1951
Chittaranjan Das (Trans.)	
<i>Raktakarabi</i>	1957
Prafulla Pattanayak (Trans.)	
<i>Gitanjali</i>	1960
Gopalchandra Misra (Trans.)	
<i>Rabindra Galpa</i> <i>o Kabita Samkalan</i>	1961
Rabi Mahapatra (Trans.)	
<i>Rabindra Puja</i>	1961
Sarala Debi	
<i>Tagore in Orissa</i> (English)	1961
Prabhat Mukhopadhyay (Trans.)	
<i>Chitrangada</i>	1961
Prabhat Mukhopadhyay (Trans.)	
<i>Prabhat Mukhopadhyayer</i> <i>Rabindra Jiban Katha</i>	1961
Bhabagrahi Misra (Trans.)	
<i>Char Adhyay</i>	1961
Ashok Rao (Trans.)	

<i>Ekoish Galpa</i>	1961
Kalindicharan Panigrahi (Trans.)	
<i>Alokarkabi</i>	
(on Rabindranath)	1961
Prafulla Das (Trans.)	
<i>Visva Manaber Pathe</i>	1963
Translation	
<i>Amar Kabi</i>	
(by Lila Majumdar)	1963
Kalindicharan Panigrahi (Trans.)	
<i>Jogajog</i>	1966
Gopinath Mahatra (Trans.)	
<i>Ghare Baire</i>	1968
Sitadebi Khadanga (Trans.)	
<i>Chokher Bali</i>	1972
Chittaranjan Das (Trans.)	
<i>Nibandha Mala</i>	
(selected essays)	1972
Gouri K. Brahama (Trans.)	
<i>Sesher Kabita</i>	1974
Sitadebi Khadanga (Trans.)	
<i>Ekottarsati</i>	
(selected poems)	1975
Sachi Routray (Trans.)	
<i>Nibandha Mala</i>	
(selected essays)	1977
Chittaranjan Das (Trans.)	
<i>Pancha Natak</i>	
(five plays)	1979
Prabhat Mukhopadhyay and others (Trans.)	
<i>Saraswat Gourab</i>	1983
Janaki Ballav Mahanti	
<i>Noukadubi</i>	1983
Banaja Debi (Trans.)	
<i>Tagore in Orissa</i> (English)	1984

Prabhat Mukhopadhyay (Trans.)	
<i>Bisvakabi Rabindranath</i>	
<i>o Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan</i>	1985
Kusha Nanda	
<i>Gitanjali</i>	1987
Khageswar Mahapatra (Trans.)	
<i>Rabindra Samakalin</i>	
<i>Kabita</i>	1988
Hrusikesh Panda	
<i>Gitanjali</i>	1991
Jagannath Patra (Trans.)	
<i>Tagore in Orissa</i> (English)	1999
Prabhat Mukhopadhyay (Trans.)	
<i>Gora</i>	2002
Rabindra Prasad Panda (Trans.)	
<i>Galpaguchha</i>	
(selected stories)	2004
Rabinda Prasad Panda (Trans.)	
<i>Galpaguchha</i>	
(selected stories)	2006
Rabindra Prasad Panda (Trans.)	

Besides these, innumerable articles on Rabindranath and his works were published in *Jhankar*, *Asantakali*, *Nabarabi*, *Agami Satabdi*, *Sahakar*, *Utkal Sahitya*, *Nabalipi*, *Odisha*, *Naba Bharat*, *Samabes*, *Konark*, *Adhuna*, *Panchajanya* and *Manasa*. While these were literary journals, *Samaj*, *Kalinga*, *Matrubhumi*, *Prajatantra*, *Pragatibadi*, *Dharitri* and other daily newspapers carried pieces on him.

In 1939, a competition among the school students of Odisha was organized by *Parlakhemundi Sahitya Samiti* on the translation of 'Kabuliwala' after its publication in *Utkal Sahitya*. Among the winners was Artatran Misra who later became an eminent writer. One unknown Debendra Kumar Singh published a poem named

'Rabindra Tarpan' in *Sahakar* in 1941. The long poem mentions the titles of 44 books of Rabindranath, and defines their meanings, purport and philosophy.

In order to perpetuate the memory of the poet, the people of Pandua have unofficially named the road from Rahama to Pandua 'Rabindra Sarani', installed a statue of the poet, established Rabindra Library, founded Bisvakabi Rabindranath Yuba Samsad and Rabindra Smriti Raksha Committee. Rabindranath is living in the hearts of the poor and simple villagers who meet every morning to clean the pedestal and garland the statue. On 9 May of every year they observe the birth anniversary of the poet with great enthusiasm and sanctity. They have built a shade over the shrine to the poet with their meagre earnings. The shade and the ancestral house of the Thakur family were damaged by the devastating floods and super-cyclone. The valuable records preserved in the house have also been washed away. The place where the poet lived and wrote has been disgracefully neglected by both the state and central governments, and the government of West Bengal has been of no help. It will be a fitting tribute if the historical place were designated a heritage building during the 150th birth anniversary of the poet.

One must mention of Banamali, the attendant who looked after his master in Santiniketan. He is remembered in oblique references in 'He madhabi dwidha keno' and 'Khapchhara', two poems of Rabindranath. The role he played in *Basikaran* staged in Santiniketan drew the attention of the audience (see the Bengali journal *Des*, 26 July 1980). After his retirement, Banamali collected books from the poet and writers from Santiniketan and preserved them in a library established in his village in Odisha as homage to his employer.

Rabindranath's impact is admittedly reflected in every section of Odia literature. Writers and readers came together to observe his birth centenary all over the state of Odisha in 1961. They also observe the birth anniversary every year, organize seminars and

publish books and essays.

In order to commemorate Rabindranath's contribution to Odisha and his links with the state, former Chief Minister of the state, Nabakrushna Chawdhury, who was a student of Santiniketan along with his wife Malati Sen, funded a postgraduate department of Odia in Visva-Bharati about sixty years back. Towards the end of the last century, a later Chief Minister of the state, Janaki Ballav Pattanayak, an outstanding scholar and follower of Rabindranath, donated a sum of Rupees eight lakhs to the Vice-Chancellor when he visited Visva-Bharati, in the belief that the lighthouse of learning founded by the poet would shine brighter in the ages to come.

INFLUENCE OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON PUNJABI LITERATURE

JASWINDER SINGH

1. Tagore: A Modern Visionary

Our late president, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, while delivering a lecture at the Tagore centenary celebrations in the Netherlands on 19 October 1961, remarked: 'To talk about Tagore is a difficult task. He is a versatile genius, a poet, a playwright, a serious thinker, a social reformer, musical composer, a dramatic director, an educationist and not least, a great painter.'¹

Tagore is the only Indian writer till now who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1913 for his book *Gitanjali*. During his lifetime (1861-1941) he published 170 books and more than 20 books have been published since his death.² He published his first book *Kabi Kahini* in 1878 and the last one to come out in his lifetime was the volume of essays entitled *Asramer Rup o Bikas* (1941). Tagore became a legend in his lifetime and his stature has continued to grow. He has been genuinely called 'a prophet poet, a poet of the modern world and world's most complete writer.'³ His

range is so vast, his artistic expression so remarkable, his concerns so serious and important, and his vision of man and the world so creative that these hardly have parallels.

Tagore was essentially a poet, but his interests were not confined to poetry alone. His literary output was diverse, but literature could not exhaust his energies. He was also a musician and a painter of a very high order. In addition, he made a notable contribution to thoughts on education, politics, social reform, and economic reconstruction. His achievements in these fields are so great that they mark him out as one of the makers of modern India. Humayun Kabir has brilliantly summed up his achievements by saying that, "Tagore's greatest strength lies in his sense of the unity of life. No bifurcation of ideals and culture divided his energies. It is, therefore, not surprising that he should recognize no separation between art and life."⁴

Tagore was one of the supreme lyric poets of the world. Sincerity of feeling and vividness of imagery combined with verbal music haunt the reader long after the actual words of the poems are forgotten. Perhaps there has never been another poet who loved the earth so passionately. It is not only the beauty of nature that bound Tagore intimately to the earth: he also loved the earth as the home of human beings. The intimate play of love, sorrow, anguish and agony in Tagore's poetry leaves one breathless.

His writings and his life confront the basic as well as most challenging concerns of modern civilization with the true, pious and undefeatable spirit of a visionary. He was in search of a more creative balance for humankind engaged in brutal clashes. He rejected the materialist and machine-oriented socio-political systems of the West, but at the same time welcomed its scientific and other modes of development. He criticized the falsities of the Indian way of life, our vices, hypocrisies and narrow-mindedness. He was an ardent admirer of a human being who was universal yet earthly, rooted in one's own language and culture, He was opposed

to any narrow-mindedness based on accepted and established structures, and which was inimical to a humane society. Punjabi literature and culture have striven hard to achieve this, although with mixed success. Genuine Punjabi writings are close to Tagore in this sense and have profited from his life and work.

Tagore was ahead of his times in his concerns. His conception of *visvamanav*, his stress on moral values, his faith in humanity, his philosophy of non-violence and his quest for synchronizing the positive energies of the natural and the human, have no parallel in contemporary Indian history. He boldly differed with Mahatma Gandhi on pivotal matters relating to the end and means of the freedom movement, although each respected the other's views. Gandhi's praise of Tagore is well known: 'The poet of Asia, as Lord Hardinge called Dr Tagore, is fast becoming, if he has not already become, the poet of the world.'⁵

The Punjabi way of life has been immensely influenced by the social and human ideals of Tagore. There are points of similarity, especially in the secular-progressive stress in both. The Punjabi mind and literary tradition were deeply influenced by this, although these are misdirected today, because of communalism, terrorism and the greed of the *bhadrak*.

Tagore's love for basic human virtues finds its most exquisite expression in the poetry he has written for children. The energy, spontaneity, innocence, wonder of childhood and even its power to transmute common things into the magical are repeatedly encountered in Tagore's verse for young readers. This is the most important part from which not only Punjabi literature, but every literary tradition can draw inspiration. To shape human beings into a real *visvamanav* is a difficult task in the present conditions. But Tagore was honest in chasing this dream, as he was in most things. In Punjabi literature, although there are a handful of texts for children, it is far from satisfactory. Tagore may show us the way here, just as he may help us brave pretence and hypocrisy.

The most remarkable element in Tagore's poetry is its prophetic spirit. A prophet in Indian writers is not a common sight. Evil filled him with rage, and he felt isolation, although his goal was welfare of society. But the tragic irony is that our social structure nurtures deep-rooted tendencies that are inhuman. Tagore wanted desperately to rid society of them. The battle is only half-won. Punjabi society derived meaningful directions from Tagore's ideas, but it still far from the ideal.

2. Tagore and Punjabi Literature

Tagore is among the very few writers who earned great praise and respect from the Punjabi community. His impact is confined not only to literature, but to social, cultural, educational and intellectual spheres as well. As an icon of Indianness, as a philosopher of modern times grounded in the Indian ethos, and as a spokesman for humanity, he is a leading figure. In Punjabi culture and literature he is regarded with a deep sense of respect and affiliation.

Punjabi writers have written poems, short-stories and essays reflecting Tagore's philosophy of life and artistic importance. Mohan Bhandari, a renowned Punjabi short-story writer and recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, wrote a story named 'Meinu Tagore Bana De Ma!' (Make me Tagore, Mother!). The story is now a classic in the history of Punjabi shorter fiction. Tagore figures as metaphor of a much desired artistic perfection in the mind of the protagonist, Badru. A schoolboy of exemplary intelligence and artistic potential, Badru aspires to become Tagore. His poet-mentor plays a major role and inspires him to emulate Tagore. After listening to a song, written by Badru the teacher remarks:

Just like Tagore! Fresh idea! Son! You will become Tagore!
Don't lose heart.⁶

But the untimely death of Badru's father pushes him to his

parental profession, transporting bricks on the backs of his ponies from the kiln to the buyers' places. His dreams are crushed under the weight of exploitative conditions. Tagore remains a name, reminiscent of the role model of an artist that had inspired the child. Inspired by his teacher-poet, Badru reads Tagore's *Gitanjali*. He strives hard to achieve the artistic heights of the work and to prepare himself to become Tagore. There are Tagore's lines written on the wall of the school, but their memory becomes a source of pain. The name of Tagore is repeated sixteen times in the story in different contexts and moods. Tagore is a central metaphor, a metaphor of the ideal artist, human virtues, and creativity. There is no cultural barrier, no obstacle of language to Badru's aspiration. Tagore is in perfect harmony with the collective unconscious of Punjabis, as is shown through the poet-teacher as well as by Badru.

This story is only one instance of how Tagore had shaped Punjabi thinking on art and how he served as a heroic role model of the artist. In my own novel *Maat-Lok*, there is a contextual reference to Rabindranath Tagore that is evidence of our respect for him. Manraj Kaur, the main character, who is acting Principal of a Government Higher Secondary School, is engrossed in the lyrical rendering of *Jana gana mana* in front of the school children during the morning prayer. The Indianness, its cultural and geographical range and grandeur, its civilizational vision and musical invocation of benediction fills every Indian's heart with pride. While listening to the national anthem, Manraj is transported to another world. Carried away by her feelings, she thinks:

What a marvellous song! How great is Tagore! Look at his open-mindedness, in National Anthem he gave Punjab first place among Indian regions, even before Bengal, Turning this over in her mind, she was filled with the brightest feelings of human pride and blissfulness.⁸

Rabindranath Tagore wrote this song in 1911 in Bengali. He himself composed the music. It has been associated with the

struggle for India's freedom and was sung in the Constituent Assembly at its historic midnight session on 14th August 1947. On 24 January 1950, it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly as India's national anthem. A true embodiment of the higher victories of the spirit and the purer longings of humanity and for its secure future, the song makes our heads bow in reverence for its composer, like Manraj's in *Maat-Lok*. One might recall Humayun Kabir's tribute to the national anthem, the 'great gift of Tagore':

Of the many things of which India can be proud about
Tagore, I believe this is in the richest. Every country is proud
of its national anthem, and rightly so. Our national anthem is
not a national anthem for India alone, but a religious hymn
for all mankind.⁹

The modern poet Mohan Singh wrote the poem titled 'Gurudev' as a tribute to Tagore. His stress was on the uncompromising fight put up by Tagore against and injustice. Tagore's sympathy for the repressed is the keynote of Mohan Singh's poem. It is Tagore, according to him, who stood with his countrymen, in the hour of tragic sufferings during the freedom movement and the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh on Baisakhi day, 13 April 1919:

Hey great Gurudev
Head of Indians
Towered in the world
When the white beard of Himalaya
Uprooted, burnt
In Jalianwala
Then your honour roared
A spark burst into fiery flame
Powerful blood boiled
Gave back Honour of the whites..
Challenged them openly
Hey great Gurudev

Why should not be proud of you
Your Hindustan!¹⁰

3. Tagore's Protest against the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre

Rabindranath Tagore returned the honour of knighthood, bestowed on him by the colonial rulers, in protest against the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The British opened fire, without warning the people who were holding a peaceful meeting in Jalianwala Bagh on Baisakhi day (13 April 1919).

There were widespread protests and resentment among Punjabis, because of this savage repression. The British officer, who had ordered indiscriminate shooting, even blocking the only narrow exit from the garden, was honoured. Tagore stood with his countrymen. This brutality was unprecedented during British rule, and the renouncing of knighthood by Tagore did much to salve the wounds. Punjabis harbour an especial esteem for Tagore because of his protest.

Through this gesture Tagore became the national voice, once again finding a theme worthy of his greatness. His burning indignation reached classic utterance, in his letter to Lord Chelmsford, renouncing his knighthood: 'The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I, for my part wish to stand shorn of all special distinction by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.'¹¹ His renunciation was declined, but he insisted on it, and ceased to use the title 'Sir'.

Tagore, a poet and philosopher of modern times, is a source of pride and inspiration for Punjabis in many ways. There is hardly any library in Punjab which does not display a painted portrait or photograph of Rabindranath Tagore. His shining silvery beard, long graceful hair, acute facial features and attractive complexion have deep resemblance with the image of a Sufi saint. He seems to

be one of us and from amongst us.

4. Tagore's Santiniketan: A Role Model for Education

Tagore's experiment in establishing a school that would serve as a new model for the education of our children in modern times is a unique example of its kind. He felt that the colonial system of education prevalent in India was mechanical. In Santiniketan he founded a school that would be rooted in the Indian cultural heritage, while equipping students for coping with contemporary challenges of civilization. Tagore had to spend a precious time of his life, ignoring pressing literary pursuits, in arranging finances and other resources for the school and, later, the university Visva-Bharati. There are dozens of educational institutions (schools, colleges) in Punjab named after Tagore, having been inspired by his vision and example. Bhupendernath Sarkar has rightly observed in his essay, 'Tagore, the Educator', that, 'Tagore's institution is a synthesis of the old *asrama* ideal of India and the modern ideal of education.'¹² For Tagore, 'Education has its object – freedom – freedom of intellect, freedom of sympathy. Freedom in the material universe through our truthful dealings with her universal laws, freedom in society through our maintaining of truth and love in all relationships.'¹³ In his essay 'A Poet's School' Tagore wrote in a similar vein, 'The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes our life in harmony with all existence.'¹⁴

Tagore was very clear about the goal of his institution: 'In my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom – freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will.'¹⁵

In spite of the efforts of our great men, much is needed to be done in our education system even today. Education has been severely and badly commercialized. There are serious challenges before our policy makers of education. Tagore advocated mother tongue as the medium of instruction. But this has not happened.

Our *bhadralok* never wanted it, because of their slave mentality and petty interests. Now globalization poses new problems before the world. Tagore was an ardent advocate of East-West creative harmony. He wanted a balanced approach and was against surrendering to a one-dimensional model of Western civilization, based on machine and profit. He wrote:

The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and over-running the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based on exclusiveness ... It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies. It feeds upon resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril, and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down races of men who are weaker to be eternally fixed in their weakness. This political civilization is scientific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul.¹⁶

Tagore categorically rejected this exclusive model of civilization. But he pointed out the strengths and positive aspects of the West. We wanted Indians to address this complex, uneven and challenging condition. We should have a balanced dialogue and welcome only that which we consider meaningful. Tagore was a rare intellectual who wanted to create a balance between the East and the West, to be kindred to home and heaven. He was above colour, caste or any negative social order, Indian or otherwise. He praised the praiseworthy in India and the West. Punjabi culture and literary tradition too have this strong tendency, and Tagore has strengthened that generous inclination. He reminds us to abjure narrowness and self-seeking: 'So, if we call Western Science "impure", merely because it was discovered in the West, we shall not only be unable to master it, but shall also be placing in a bad light that Eastern science which teaches of moral purity.'¹⁷

5. Punjabi Readership and Audience

Tagore's deep impact on Punjabi culture and literature can be judged from the volume of his writings translated into the Punjabi language. Although Punjabis read him in Hindi and English, a writer's popularity may be gauged from the amount one has been translated into that language. Tagore has perhaps been translated into Punjab more than any other Indian or foreign writer. All major publishers – including academies, government and semi-government institutions – have brought out Tagore's writings. His poetry, fiction, drama and prose all have been translated. The English *Gitanjali* has been translated five times into Punjabi by different scholars and published. Punjabi Academy Sahitya Akademi and National Book Trust are among the prominent institutions, which commissioned translations. On the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Tagore, his selected works named *Tagore Rachanavali* in twelve volumes has been published recently (December 2010) by Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana, with financial help from Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

Tagore's plays have been translated into Punjabi and staged regularly. Kewal Dhaliwal, a theatre personality of international fame has played Tagore's drama *Jivan Dhara* recently at many places with resounding success. Surjeet Pattar, a Punjabi poet, has dramatized Tagore's story 'Streer Patra'. Neelam Maan Singh has directed this critically acclaimed play. Tagore's novels and short-stories have been translated into Punjabi and have received overwhelming response from readers. His stories 'Kabuliwala' and 'Home-coming' are popular among our readers. Tagore's writings are part of the curriculum in schools, colleges and universities in Punjab. At Punjabi University, Patiala, Tagore's *Gitanjali* and his novel *Gora* are part of the M.A. course in Punjabi.

Surjeet Pattar, a prominent contemporary Punjabi poet, recipient of Sahitya Akademi and Saraswati Awards, has memorably captured the appeal of genuine literary merit in a

couplet in one of his gazals:

*Mein tan nahin rahanga, mere geet rahenge
Pani ne mere geet, mein pani te leek haan.*¹⁸
(I will not live, my songs will remain
My songs are just water, I am a line on it.)

Bhai Veer Singh, one of the eminent founders of modern Punjabi literature, has written:

*Jad sundarta darshan deve
Sabh koi apni jane.*¹⁹
(When beauty unfolds,
Everybody owns it.)

This is absolutely true so far as Rabindranath Tagore is concerned. The rivalries contemporaries have not succeeded in undermining him. With time, Tagore's immense contribution is being recognized more and more, not by Indians alone but by people across the world. Punjabis have not only owned Tagore, but have followed him and have drawn inspiration from his open-mindedness, genuine affection and love. Maybe they have nothing to share, but high virtues of humanity, compassion for sufferers and artistic gifts. Rabindranath Tagore's personality, life and work have left a permanent imprint on the sensibilities of the writers and readers of Punjabi literature. This bond between Tagore and Punjabi literature will continue to enrich the creative and critical faculties of the Punjabi literary fraternity.

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THE IMPACT OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON SINDHI LITERATURE

JETHO LALWANI

In 1931, Count Herman Kaiserling, a German philosopher, described Rabindranath Tagore in the *Golden Book of Tagore* as the greatest and most broad-minded living scholar. The range of Tagore's work was astounding – poems, prose fiction, drama, autobiography, essays, travelogues, children's literature, letters – not to speak of his achievements in music and the visual arts.

In 1942, Mangharam Malkani translated *Gitanjali* into Sindhi. Thousands of copies were sold out within a short period. *Gitanjali* in Sindhi was prescribed for study in academic courses. Other poetic collections were translated into Sindhi. Mangharam Malkani translated these poems with the title of *Preet Ja Geet*, which was published in the year 1940. Malkani also translated *The Gardener* into Sindhi in poetic prose. This book was earlier translated by Ustad Lalchand under the title of *Sada Gulab*. Another collection, *Fula Chand*, which was translated by Hariram Dayaram Madiwala and published in 1956 by Hindustan Sahitya

Mala. Krishna Kripalani translated Tagore's poems under the title of *Shah Jahan* and published the collection in 1935. *Crescent Moon* was translated with the title of *Balchandarma* by Arjun Israni and published by Ratan Sahitya Mandal in the year 1940. Bihari Shahri also translated Tagore's poetry into Sindhi as *Hawa Jo Sandes*.

Tagore's poetry is simple, delicate and melodious. Manoharlal Kauromal in his book *Sahitya Jo Singar* says that there was a musician Harindranath, a great singer whose translations of Tagore's compositions were superb. Artists have picturized the dreams and thoughts of Tagore. Purushottam Bachwani sketched a picture of a beautiful woman in Mangharam Malkani's song *Andh Mandh*. The latter was published in the weekly Sindhi newspaper *Hindwasi* on 29 March 1956.

Tagore was a great writer of stories. His family life, the graphic depiction of human nature, and social problems and issues are only indirectly present in his poetry. But these find artistic expression in his prose fiction. Out of the short stories Tagore wrote between 1891 and 1914, 21 were translated into Sindhi by Fatechand Vaswani. This book of selected 21 stories was published by Sahitya Akademi in 1963. These stories prove that Tagore was among the greatest masters of short fiction. Stories such as 'Post Master' and 'Kabuliwala' have become set texts in literature courses in Sindhi schools. In the year 1927, Giridharilal Kripalani translated Tagore's stories such as 'Nirupama Jo Ulhano', 'Sufi', 'Soghro', 'Akreen Piya', and 'Sorhan Singar'.

Tagore's long novel, *The Wreck (Naukadubi)*, was translated by Chuharmal under the title of *Toofani Rang*. In 1936, Guli Kripalani (Guli Sardarangani) made an acclaimed translation of *Gora*, in which we find Tagore addresses the questions of nationhood and social discrimination.

In the year 1955, Karmachand Devani translated *Tin Sangi*, a new experiment in prose fiction. The book is made up of three independent stories. Tagore's *Sanjog (Jogajog)* was translated

by Chuharmal Darhyanomal Hinduja and published by Sahitya Akademi in 1973. Krishna Kripalani translated *Chokher Bali* as *Vinodini*. He used the English word 'Eyesore' for the heroine's sobriquet (*chokher bali*, literally, sand in the eye). Chuharmal, taking this cue, gave the Sindhi translation of the novel the title *Akh Soor*. In addition there are other renderings of the poet's works into Sindhi by such translators as Tirath Hirongani, Melaram Vaswani, Rochiram Gangaram, Shewaran Advani, Moti Chhabriya, Laxman Sahti, Jethanand Ralwani, Jethamal Gulrazani and Jagat Advani. They translated not only the poems, stories and novels, but also the song-plays such as *Balmiki Pratibha* (Jagat Advani in 1967) and philosophical essays such as *Sadhana* (Virumal Meghraj in 1923). Books on Tagore were translated as well, such as Narain Bharti's book on Tagore as poet.

When Tagore visited Sindh in 1923, his play *Chitra* was performed. The poet laid the foundation of Rabindranath Natak Mandali, which functioned under the guidance of Khanchand Daryani and Mangharam Malkani. Malkani writes:

... I played the role of Arjun and the role of *Chitra* was performed by Sri Tahilram Advani, as girls in those days did not act in plays. On the next day, Tagore called us at his place and said that the enthusiasm with which you both played the roles on stage was extraordinary such as I have not witnessed anywhere else.

Chitra was also performed at the Karachi Club Branch. The Sindhi translation of *Chitra* was published in a Sindhi periodical in 1940.

Between 1924 and 1927, the newly founded Sindh College Drama Society produced *Masum*, *Raja Rani* and *Balidan*. Professor Malkani also took part in these productions. *Balidan* was filmed twice, with Mohan Bhavnani as director in one. Tagore's *Dakghar*, arguably his best play, was produced in 1937 by Professor Malkani at the Golden Jubilee of Sindh College. The performance was

attended by thousands and its success remains unmatched. The play was published in a journal as *Azadiya Jo Kodio* in 1938. Malkani has translated other plays included in the collection *Tagore Ja Natak*. The play *Rath Yatra* was translated by Acharya Gidwani. *Muktadhara* was translated into Sindhi by Chuharmal Hinduja. Periodicals such as *Hindwasi* and literary societies such as Ratan Sahitya Mandal (founded in 1930 by Chuharmal Hinduja) introduced Tagore's works to Sindhi readers by publishing many translations. In 1961 Tagore's birth centenary was observed the world over. Sindhi periodicals such as *Kunj*, *Sindhi Times* and *Sahityakar* published special editions.

Eminent Sindhis studied at Tagore's school and university in Santiniketan. They include Krishna Kripalani (later secretary of Sahitya Akademi), Krishin Khatwani and Lekhu Tulsiani. These students carried the poet to the Sindhi readers, and at times, to the masses. Tagore had faith in the masses: he believed God dwells with the peasant in the field and the tiller in the cottage. He did not believe in renunciation but a life of action. Sindhis may claim the universal poet as their own. In his songs we have heard the voice of the heroines of our legends and folk-tales such as Umar-Marvi, Sassi Punnun, and Sorath Rai Diyach (Bijal). Rabindranath Tagore is the *anmol ratan* of Sindhi literature as much as he is of the Bengali.

THE IMPACT OF TAGORE ON TAMIL LITERATURE

S. KRISHNAMOORTHY

We know that the Indian renaissance started in Bengal in the nineteenth century and that it encompassed all fields of human activity: religion, social reform, education, arts and literature. We also know that its influence spread across the country in course of time. The first and the only modern Bengali epic *Meghnadbadh Kabya* was written by Michael Madhusudan Datta; Bankimchandra fashioned modern Indian fiction; and that later Saratchandra's novels made him popular all over India.

The earliest translator from Bengali to Tamil was Maheskumar Sarma who translated Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* and *Chandrasekhar*. The great patriot poet Subramanya Bharathi and the revolutionary V. V. Subramania Iyer translated a few short stories of Tagore. Iyer is hailed as the father of the modern Tamil short story. His story 'Kulathangarai Arasamaram Chonna Kathai' (the story told by the pipal tree on the tank bund) may be said to have been influenced by Tagore's

'Ghater Katha.' Bharathi has made appreciative references to Tagore and his opinions in the magazines edited by him. Among the early translators of *Gitanjali* are V. R. M. Chettiar and Swami Vipulanand of Jaffna.

The second quarter of the last century may be called the golden age of translations into Tamil. During this period many translated the novels and short stories of the Bengali trinity – Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra. Premchand, the Hindi writer, and the Marathi novelist V. S. Khandekar were also rendered into Tamil. These translations first appeared serially in Tamil magazines and were later published in the form of books. They became popular among Tamil readers and gave them a taste of good literature. They also provided a model for budding Tamil writers. Readers of my generation still relish with nostalgia the memory of that period.

The choice of these three languages by the translators was not because of any special preference or plan. Bengali literature was at the height of its glory. Tagore had become internationally renowned and some of his works were available in English translations published by Macmillan and in Hindi. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, many educated Tamils learnt Hindi as a patriotic duty and gained access to Hindi literature and Hindi translations of Bengali fiction.

The Tamil writer T. N. Kumaraswami spent a few months in Santiniketan and learnt Bengali. After he returned to Tamil Nadu, his younger brother T. N. Senapati learnt Bengali from him. These two litterateurs have between them translated about 50 Bengali novels and collections of shorter fiction among which many were works by Tagore.

The atmosphere in Tamil Nadu was favourable to the translation boom. Consequent on the spread of education, a new generation of educated Tamils was coming up. They wanted to read good literature that was at once entertaining and uplifting. They

were not satisfied with the then existing Tamil magazines which were heavy reading with serious articles on morality, religion and ancient literature. New magazines were brought out to cater to the needs of this generation. But there were only a few Tamil writers to supply adequate material, and the new magazines turned to translations to make up for the deficit.

Apart from the Kumaraswami brothers, more than a dozen translators have tried their hand at translating Tagore, and such translations continue to appear even now. Many stories of Tagore are translated more than once. Almost all the fictional works of Tagore are, rather were, available in Tamil at one time, but some of these have gone out of print. Many of Tagore's poems, songs, plays, essays, travelogues, reminiscences and essays were translated and were once available. It is perhaps unnecessary to list them now. During Tagore's centenary in 1961, Sahitya Akademi and some other publishers brought out collections of Tagore's poems, stories and plays mostly in Kumaraswami's translation. The UNESCO, I am told, has taken up a project to publish all the works of Tagore to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary, but I could be mistaken.

One important point is that except the Kumaraswami brothers few of the other translators had the opportunity to learn Bengali. They translated from either English or Hindi. Translation is a difficult art. 'Translators are traitors,' says an Italian proverb. It is not a simple matter of replacing the words of the giver language by their synonyms in the receiver language. A good translator should be familiar with the social structure, culture and literary heritage of the people who speak the source language. When a translator does not have this knowledge, the translation is likely to be imperfect and misleading. This difficulty is further compounded if the translation is made through a third language. This is the common difficulty with the Tamil translations of Tagore. Even the translations by the Kumaraswami brothers are not entirely free of such defects, one could say this without the risk of belittling their pioneering service.

It is needless to stress the difficulty of translating poetry. Dr Johnson wrote, 'Poetry cannot be translated.' Robert Frost echoed the view, 'Poetry is that which is lost in translation!' Tagore was a many-sided genius but he is better known as *bisvakabi*. The translations of his poetry have to be done carefully so that the original is not distorted. Translation of poetry into another language will be satisfactory only if the translator is also a poet in the target-language. If he does not know the original language well, he should seek the assistance of someone with the required competence.

A. Srinivasa Raghavan, a good Tamil poet living in Tuticorin, took up the translation of Tagore's poems. But he had to rely on the English translations. Luckily for him, the Bengali writer Rabindrakumar Bhattacharya (pseud. Bodhisatva Maitreya) was working in that town. Srinivasa Raghavan took Bhattacharya's help with the original poems. His translations turned out to be more authentic than the usual ones. He translated 120 poems, most of them from *The Crescent Moon*, *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*. He also wrote a number of critical essays on Tagore's works.

Tagore visited the Soviet Union in 1930 on the invitation of the Soviet government. The colonial Indian government did not like the idea of the visit, but dared not obstruct the wishes of a Nobel laureate. Tagore toured the country for two weeks and recorded his impressions of the changes brought about by the Soviet revolution in letters to his friends and relations in India. He was all praise for the progress achieved in social reform, education, agriculture and other fields. But he was percipient enough to disown the major defect of the Soviet system – absence of personal initiative and freedom of opinion. He believed that the very spread of education among the people would one day bring about the downfall of the Soviet system. He wrote of the Soviet authorities in one of his letters:

It does not appear to me that these people have correctly

understood the limits of the individual and society. From this point of view they are also like fascists. Therefore, they do not hesitate to oppose the individual in the interest of social good. Society cannot be made strong by weakening the individual. They forget that a society consisting of chained people cannot be strong. Here we have the dictatorship of the strong ... it is not easy to make free a part of the mind and suppress the other part by animal force. Fear may suppress the mind for some time, but the mind which has received the light of education will one day rebel and insist on freedom of opinion ...

Poets are thought to be prophets. Tagore proved to be one. After 60 years of his visit the Soviet Union collapsed like a house of cards. I had read *Russiar Chithi* a few decades earlier as a student of Bengali. When the Soviet system crashed, I recalled Tagore's prophetic words and wanted to bring them to the notice of Tamil readers. I decided to translate the *Russiar Chithi* on my own and completed the translation with Visva-Bharati's permission.

After this I decided to take up Tamil translations of Tagore. I translated *Kanika*, a collection of more than 100 short verses of 2 to 10 lines each, consisting of worldly wisdom and philosophical thoughts. This translation has been published in a slim volume which also contains my translation of a few short stories and literary essays of Tagore. I have since translated *Katha o Kahini*, a collection of narrative poems on miscellaneous themes, gathered from Buddhist, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Marathi and Bengali history and folklore. I am now engaged in the Tamil translation of a hundred selected songs of Tagore, popularly known as Rabindra Sangit.

In addition to these, there are a number of Tamil biographies, and critical works on Tagore. Some of the important ones are:

1. K. Chandrasekharan, *Rabindranath Tagore: Life and Poetry*
2. R Krishnamurthy, *Tagore Darisanam*

3. A. Manivasagam, *The Fruit of Tagore's Poetry*
4. T. P. Minakshi Sundaram, *Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet*
5. A. V. Subramaniam and V. Sundararajan, *Rabindranath Tagore*
6. Swami Suddhananda Bharati, *Tagore, the Gifted Poet*
7. Raghunathan, *Gangaiym Karrivum*
8. C. Murugesan, *Tagore and Gandhiji*
9. T. N. Senapati, *Jarryum Morghiyum* (life and sayings of Tagore for children)
10. Lila Majumdar, *A Poet's Story*, trans. (into Tamil)

T. N. Senapati

For the purpose of this paper, I contacted a number of Tamil scholars and writers of my generation, and younger writers for their recollections and impressions of Tagore's works. Of these I have received the responses of Indira Parthasarathy, winner of Sahitya Akademi and Sangit Natak Akademi awards, Asokamitran, Sahitya Akademi awardee, Narasiah, Tamil writer and chronicler, K. Chellappan, Tamil scholar and writer, K. Nachimuthu, Tamil scholar and writer, M. A. Suseela, Tamil scholar and writer, Kamalaslan, Sahitya Akademi awardee, Subra Bharati Manian, Tamil writer, Vanna Nilavan, Tamil writer and columnist, and Periava, Tamil writer. Their responses show how deeply they have been impressed and inspired by Tagore's works.

Indira Parthasarathy writes:

Indians who were youths in the forties of the last century could not have escaped from the influence of Gandhiji in regard to their political consciousness. In the same way, any one young and had [*sic*] literary consciousness, during the same period, could not have been but influenced by Rabindranath Tagore.

The first story of Tagore which I read when I was in the school studying in the eighth class in the forties, was 'Subha' which was the name of the main character. Her full name was Subhashini. This was the first lesson that taught me 'literary

irony' ... I got interested in Tagore and I started reading some of his other short stories available in translation during that period. 'Kabuliwala' haunted me for a long time and I used to feel that my life's ambition would be fulfilled if only I could write one story like that.

I read *Gitanjali* when I was in the college. As one who was genetically wired to appreciate devotional poetry by my belonging to a staunch vaishnavite family, Tagore's work touched me to my inner depths. I knew most of the poems in *Gitanjali* by heart.

I read Tagore's novels a little later. His novels did not make a deep impression on me as his short stories and poems. Maybe because of the translations. Translations may be the nearest approximation but they cannot convey the cultural nuances of the language.

I immensely liked his play *The King of the Dark Chamber*, which I read much later after I started writing. It is a mysterious play endowed with multiple layers of meanings and even now, as I read it, I am able to find yet another dimension that what is good literature is all about. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* which was not even staged and published during the time Shakespeare lived, is now considered ... the most brilliant of all his plays by modern scholars for its cynicism, biting satire and Olympian irony. I read somewhere that *The King of the Dark Chamber* was considered by the Bengali critics as a controversial and confusing play at the time it was published.

Asokamitran says that not only he, but many of his predecessors – N. Pichamurthi, K. P. Rajagopalan, Puvalur Sundararaman, Sumathi Ramasami, Anuthama etc. were influenced by Tagore, and he himself has written 20 to 30 stories under Tagore's inspiration. He has specifically referred to his story 'Kolam' ('Alpana') as one such story.

Narasaiah has mentioned that Chitti, Tamil writer and critic,

has written in detail about V. V. S. Iyer's story about the pipal tree referred to earlier. Chitti's opinion was that the story was written by Iyer, when he was living *incognito* in Puducherry and he got the story published in a Tamil magazine in his wife's name in order to keep his whereabouts secret.

K. Chellappan said that he was inspired by the spiritual humanism of Tagore as seen in his *Religion of Man*. Chellappan has written a thesis comparing Tagore with Subramanya Bharathi and T. S. Eliot. He sees similarity between Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Bharathi's *Kannanpattu* (songs on Krishna) in their approach to God. He has rebutted the view that Bharathi's nearness to God is not as intimate as Tagore's *jiban debata*.

K. Nachimuthu has furnished the following information:

Bharati has translated eight short stories, one poem and five essays of Tagore. He has made appreciative references to Tagore in many of his articles published in the various magazines owned or edited by him and also in the newspaper *Swadesamitran* of which he was the Assistant Editor. His last article on Tagore entitled 'Sri Rabindra Digvijayam' was published in the *Swadesamitran* dated 25.8.1921 less than three weeks before his death on 11.9.1921.

Kamalavelan has written an emotion-charged long article on Tagore. Because of constraints of space, I give below the article's brief English version.

Bengali literature has made a special contribution to Indian literature. It is being talked about even today.

Tagore stands distinctly apart from other Bengali writers. He had the noble heart to say, 'Where the whole world becomes one nest.' He roused the people who were plunged in lethargy and pride and showed them the way.

The comments bring to my mind Western responses to Tagore, such as those of Count Hermann Keyserling and W. B.

Yeats.

Has Tamil Nadu known and felt the great poet fully? It is a bitter truth that we Tamils do not know Tagore's works even to the extent that we know Malayalam literature. Nobody in Tamil Nadu thinks beyond Bharathi and Bharathi Dasan. Great geniuses like Tagore were blocked out after the Dravida and communist ideologies started striking roots in Tamil Nadu. It is my view that Tagore has not received due attention in schools, colleges and universities.

Many of us believe that because Tagore was high-born, he could not sympathize with the problems of the life of the poor. But Tagore is a many-sided creative artist excelling in many fields. His role in children's literature is of great historical significance. He fought for women's liberty and rights. His stories 'Post Master' and 'Kabuliwala' are exceptional in their universal reach. There are other stories such as 'Ghater Katha,' 'Putrajagna' which testify to his creative genius.

Subra Bharathi Manian is impressed with the romanticism of Tagore that was permeated with Western cultural values, as seen in *Ghare Baire* and *Chokher Bali*. In *Chaturanga* Tagore ably portrays the conflict between religion and modernity. He has brought out the futility of violence in *Char Adhyay*. *Malancha* and *Jogajog* are two other Tagore's works which Subra Bharathi Manian admires.

Vanna Nilavan writes:

In the 1950's and 1960's Tamil translations of Tagore novels and *Gitanjali* were published by many publishers. I have read *Gitanjali* even in my school days. The first prose work of Tagore that I read was the short story collection containing *Postmaster and Other Stories*. Then I read *Nashtaneed*, a wonderful novel. Alliance Company has reprinted T. N. Kumaraswami's Tamil translations of Tagore's works.

I remember having read many short stories in *Manjari*, the Tamil digest. The film *Charulata* directed by Satyajit Ray

is based on Tagore's story. I have seen this film a number of times. Some plays of Tagore have been translated into Tamil but they have not been reprinted.

Azhagin Periavan writes:

Each Indian language literature has been influenced by the other Indian language literatures and Western languages. The influence is responsible for new trends in the said literature.

Tamil prose has been greatly inspired by English literature. Bengali literature has also provided similar inspiration to Tamil prose.

I have been avidly reading the poems and fictional works by Tagore, Bankimchandra and Saratchandra. One of my favourite novels is *Pather Panchali* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay.

I have been greatly attracted to Tagore. His stories 'Postmaster' and 'Homecoming' and his poetry are my lasting memory. *Gitanjali* is one of my favourites.

Tagore's artistic feeling, the beautiful way in which he portrays the natural qualities of man and the poetic sorrow revealed in his poetry have the power to produce a deep impression. Through his poetry I feel nature and the noble spirit inherent in it is a 'revelation'.

I am enthralled by the many-sidedness of Tagore. His achievements in the different fields of art and literature such as poetry, painting and music, and his personality have produced a remarkable impression on me. Tagore had lived the ideal life adored by poets. Many people desire to have a similar life of beauty and this is because of Tagore's own example. I am also one of those who aspire to such a life.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S INFLUENCE ON MODERN TELUGU LITERATURE

AKKIRAJU RAMAPATHI RAO

The awakening and influence of Bengal in modern Indian history was described by the well-known historian Jadunath Sarkar in the following words.

If Periclean Athens was the school of Hellas, the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence, that was Bengal to the rest of India under British rule, but with a borrowed light which it made its own with marvellous cunning. In the new Bengal originated every good and great thing of the modern world that passed on to the other parts of India ... New literary types, reform of the language, social reconstruction, political aspirations, religious movements and even changes in manners that originated in Bengal, passed like ripples from a central eddy, across provincial barriers, to the farthest corners of India.

No other region influenced the rest of India as much as Bengal did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The important reason

for this was that Kolkata was the capital of colonial India until 1911. Bengal was the first to feel the impact of British culture, education, social life, literature and customs. Raja Rammohan Roy submitted a memorandum to Lord Amherst, the Governor General, in 1823 in which he urged that in the schools proposed to be started by the government English education and modern science should be taught and that there was no need to waste scarce resources on Sanskrit and Arabic learning. However, he was not prepared to accept British culture and social norms. Hence he initiated reforms in his own religion. The Brahmo Samaj was a result of that effort. Rammohan did not reject the Vedas and faith in God. But he did not allow idol worship. He denounced social evils and propagated their eradication. In this way, the Brahmo Samaj heralded a great transformation in religious ideas, theology and cultural practices.

This is the background of Rabindranath Tagore and his literary personality. He came from a family that had been wealthy and 'modern' for three generations. Tagore's grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore collaborated with the British merchants in running large businesses, including large commercial banks. He was called Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. He was one of the wealthiest persons in India in those days, and made a trip to Europe in 1841. He owned *zamindaris* in extensive parts of Bengal, invested in indigo factories, coal mines, saltpetre, sugar and tea. In addition, his ancestors owned *zamindari* rights in Behrampur and Cuttack. He was a contemporary and close friend of Rammohan Roy, and like him passed away in England.

Dwarkanath's son Debendranath was less interested in material prosperity and worldly pleasures. When he was 22 years old he took charge of the Brahmo Samaj and its congregations. He started a spiritual and philosophical periodical *Tatwabodhini Patrika* and preached Brahmo tenets through it when he was barely 25 years old. He went on a solitary quest in the Simla peaks in the vicinity of Himalayas when he was only 40 years old. The Tagores

owned a marvellous mansion in Jorasanko in Kolkata. The main entrance of this palatial structure, the Upanishadic exhortation is a *vasyamidam sarvam*, adorns the top of the gateway. Rammohan Roy's son Ramaprasad was Debendranath's classmate and friend. Ramakrishna Paramahansa held Debendranath in high esteem. He even visited Debendranath for spiritual insight and questioned him about the nature of reality. Debendranath brought out a treatise on the Brahmo faith on the lines of *Bhagavat Gita*. It contains 15 chapters and is considered the essence of eleven important Upanishads.

One needs to look back at Debendranath to appreciate that Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* owes much to his father's spiritual *sadhana* and mystic experiences. *Gitanjali*'s philosophical stance, mystic symbols and devotional fervour were partially drew on his father's spiritual attitudes. Moreover, Debendranath was the originator of *brahmasangeet* which was familiar in Brahmo congregations. This was an early inspiration in Rabindranath's musical career. Debendranath was a worshipper of nature's beauty, and this trait too Rabindranath may have derived from his father.

Debendranath recorded in his autobiography that at the age of eighteen he had a deep spiritual experience following intense grief over the death of his grandmother. This culminated in the sudden birth of a song which was the first of many to follow. The burden of the song was that all was pitch dark, the daylight futile, without the light of knowledge. Such episodes may lie behind the mystic grace of Tagore's *Gitanjali* – its compassion, meditation on the divine, undying hope, quest for beauty, and devotion.

We do not find another creative writer in the regional languages of India of the twentieth century who could be compared to Tagore. He was unrivalled as poet, novelist, playwright, writer of short stories, and philosopher. It was natural that he would have a strong influence on all Indian literatures. The award of the Nobel prize to him was also perhaps another reason for his pervasive

influence.

It is no surprise then that Telugu literature should bear the stamp of Tagore's impact. He has also influenced the nationalist perspective of the Telugu people. The Telugus are akin to Bengalis in many ways – emotional, liberal, patriotic, with a deep love of tradition and culture. Telugu-speakers often name their children after Bengal's distinguished personalities. These names include Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Saratchandra, Chittaranjan, Bipinchandra and Rabindranath. They have streets named after them. Their institutions commemorate them. We do not find this kind of love of all that is of Bengal in any other southern Indian state. The premier centre of cultural activities in the capital of Andhra Pradesh is named after Tagore (Rabindra Bharati).

As early as the first decade of the twentieth century many Telugu creative writers gravitated to Santiniketan. Telugu romantic poetry (*bhava kavita*) shaped itself under the strong impact of Tagore. A good many poets of this school such as Rayaprothu Subba Rao and Abburi Ramakrishna Rao studied at Santiniketan. Gurujada Appa Rao, who is hailed as the father of modern Telugu literature, knew Tagore and corresponded with him. Tagore's influence paved the way for many modern trends in Telugu literature, starting with the ones in the work of Gurujada Appa Rao. The genre of *khanda kavya* (short poem) enjoyed popularity in Telugu for about two decades from 1910 to 1930. Its love of nature, human concerns, and celebration of rural simplicity through the adoption of folk lyric forms came into Telugu literature as a result of Tagore's impact. A well-known Telugu literary journal, *Trilinga*, published Tagore's story 'Kabuliwala' in translation as early as 1914. The journal was edited by Umakanta Vidyasekara who had studied in Kolkata for a couple of years. It is not certain if any journal published Tagore in translation in any other regional language in India by 1915 or 1916. This is hardly surprising, given the early history of the cultural contact between Telugu- and

Bengali-speaking peoples. Telugu statesmen and scholars such as Panappakam Ananthacharyulu and Umakantam were honoured in Nabadwip in the beginning of the twentieth century. Telugu literary association was already active in the Kolkata in first quarter of the last century.

Venkata Parvateeswara Kavulu published *Ekanta Seva* in 1922. It was acclaimed as the *Gitanjali* of Telugu literature. Abburi Ramakrishna Rao, a great poet and literary critic, studied at Santiniketan. He wrote that along with English, Bengali literature had exercised a strong influence on Telugu literature. Umakantam introduced a modern strain into Telugu literary criticism because of his familiarity with Bengali. He studied in Kolkata while Tagore's fame was at its highest. Many well-known Bengali scholars were among his friends and admirers.

Tagore visited the Andhra region in 1911 and stayed at Madanapalle. He composed *Jana gana mana*, the national anthem, during his journey there. Adibhatla Narayana Dasu, a musician and exponent of *Harikatha*, gave a performance of *Harikatha* during his visit to Kolkata. Tagore was present and was deeply impressed. When the great poet met him at Vizianagram in Andhra many years later, he greeted Dasu and recalled with pleasure his exposition of the raga of *behag*. Dasu was also an accomplished poet in English. His poem 'The Traveller' received scholarly appreciation.

Thanks to the patronage of the Raja of Pithapuram, the Brahmo Samaj was firmly established in the Andhra region. Raja was a great admirer of Tagore. Tagore visited Pithapuram on the invitation of the Raja. The poet was honoured at a magnificent ceremony. The great Telugu romantic poet Devulapalli Krishna Sastri witnessed it at Pithapuram as a young man. Another poet, Auantsa Soma Sundar, admitted to Tagore's influence on his poetry. An eminent academic of Andhra, Sir Rahupathy Venkataratnan Naidu, was a devout preacher of the Brahmo Samaj. He was instrumental in getting the autobiography of Debendranath Tagore

published in Telugu translation in 1921. *Gitanjali* was rendered into Telugu by 1916. There are now close to a hundred translations of *Gitanjali* in Telugu. Pallela Sri Ramachenadrudu made a Sanskrit translation of *Gitanjali* and dedicated it to Jawaharlal Nehru. Gudipati Venkata Chalam, who caused a stir in Telugu literature as a rebel, translated *Gitanjali* in poetic prose. A well-known scholar of English, Peddada Ramaswami, wrote a detailed commentary in English on *Gitanjali*.

The Brahmo Samaj influenced the poet Devulapalli Krishna Sastri. He composed a number of Brahmo hymns in Telugu for the use of Samaj at Kakinada which was next only to Kolkata in the propagation of the Brahmo creed. *Bhakta Chintamani* a century of verses written by Vaddadi Subbarayudu was also influenced by the Brahmo Samaj. Mallavarapu Visweswara Rao, a poet of the new *kavya* school, translated Tagore's essays and got them published in two volumes. Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narsimham made detailed references to Tagore in his autobiography. Digavalli Venkatasiva Rao translated *Bharatavarsha Charitra*, the original of which was published in *Modern Review*. Abburi Ramakrishna Rao translated Tagore's *Red Oleanders* into Telugu and published it in 1923 in the literary journal *Sarada*. Almost the entire corpus of Tagore's writings was published in Telugu in the twenties of the last century. By the 1930s, the novel *Gora* was set as a text for study in the colleges of Andhra.

In 1948, Devulapalli Krishna Sastri published an essay in the journal *Bharati* surveying Telugu literature of the preceding 25 years. He referred to the pervasive influence of Tagore on Telugu literature. In 1962, Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi published a souvenir commemorating the Tagore centenary. Bezawada Gopal Reddy, a former student of Santiniketan, and also a prominent political leader of Andhra, translated the plays of Tagore into Telugu. He knew Tagore personally and worked hard to popularize his literature in the Andhra region. A lesser known facet of Tagore's influence was that he was instrumental in the growth of Telugu

literature in the popular idiom, as the poet himself wrote and persuaded others to write in *chalita* Bengali (popular Bengali)

In 1937 a memorable event took place. There was then in existence an academic institution in Vizianagram called Andhra Research University. It used to present honorary degrees to writers. Tagore was invited and felicitated at the institution in 1937. The poet was given the title of *Kavi Samrat*. The citation presented to him at the convocation reads as follows:

It is historic in that our venerable poet laureate of Asia, the Indian President of the International PEN organization and the illustrious Kulapati of the Visva Bharati University is graciously accepting our highest degree of 'Kavi Samrat' (Lord des Letters Class I)

We are today according this highest honour of our University to our world renowned poet Dr Rabindranath Tagore, the illustrious son of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore mostly because this ancient *Upanishadic* faith ... has been so remarkably illustrated, amplified, expounded and emphasized by this great Kulapati in rest and work, in lecture and story, in poetry and song, in art and dance day in and day out at his great Santiniketan Ashram today, the pilgrimage of western savants.

One M. Sriram Murthy wrote the following praise of Tagore on the occasion:

Brightest star of thy country's morning sky
Singer of a more radiant-day than ever was whose voice
sounds ...
Like the chant of Veda!
Thou hast communed with the maker of the cosmic music
Thy speech is begemmed with its luminous perfection
Thine ears are tuned
To its ever varying harmonies;
Thine eyes do rest on all its multi-hued patterns of dreams!

Thou, the messenger of the Eternal
 Dost serenely move amidst our temporal shores
 Winning our steps by thy song
 To the land of immaculate beauty and joy.

Pantula Lakshmi Narayana Sastri, an eminent scholar and poet of Sanskrit, wrote three *slokas* on the occasion eulogizing Tagore. One of them runs as follows:

*Aanyatmikam parama santimayeem
 Anandineem, amrita poorha kalaa vilaasaam
 Jyotsnaam probodha vishayaam, vikirasya poorvah
 Tasmaat rabindra kavi chandra namo namste.*

Rayaprolu Subba Rao wrote five verses in Telugu and presented them to Tagore as *panchadali* (a five petaled flower). Bhogaraju Narayana Murthy extolled Tagore's poetry in a number of verses, at the convocation.

As we celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Tagore, it is fit that we should remember the strong, deep and manifold impact of Tagore on Telugu literature over the last hundred years.

THE INFLUENCE OF TAGORE ON URDU LITERATURE

SHAFEEY KIDWAI

Urdu, spoken by more than 59 million Indians (according to the Indian census of 2001), is sometimes erroneously perceived as a language of a religious community, or one that has something to do with the Greek muse of lyric poetry, Erato. Seldom does its syncretizing prowess of strengthening cultural pluralism by macerating the creative output of a number of eminent writers get applause. Contrary to the widely held view that it regurgitates the themes of many well-known Persian and Arabic poets, Urdu literature since its inception has kept an eye on the authors of different languages especially who write in the languages spoken in India, the birthplace of Urdu. In line with its age-long resilience, Urdu literature took to Tagore, whose unmatched creativity, reflected equally in poetry, fiction, music, painting, acting and teaching, and his multifaceted personality fired the imagination of Urdu writers and readers.

Much before the Nobel prize was bestowed upon Tagore,

Munsi Premchand, who laid the foundation of fiction in Urdu, referred to him in his letters repeatedly. He admitted that he learnt from Tagore the art of juxtaposing the humdrum details of everyday life with the eternal verities. In a letter addressed to Munsi Daya Narain Nigam dated 10 September 1910, he alludes to one of his unfinished story that owed much to Tagore:

I started writing a tale titled 'Vikramadat ka Tegha'; I have jotted thirteen pages so far and intend to add five or six more. Finishing it quickly, I will send it to you. I have been ruminating over the story for many months. I believe I have emulated Rabindra's style successfully. It is not a bad imitation, the plot is entirely original.¹

In the same letter, Munsi Premchand advises the editor to get in touch with Tagore for obtaining a good painting for his journal, as it no longer carries good colour photographs:

Zamana has not carried a good coloured photograph for two months. Ravi Verma is no longer in, why don't you contact Rabindranath who is an admirer of paintings? (p. 41)

Premchand's letters, written between 1910 and 1932, are replete with references to Tagore and his name appears 12 times. It looks pertinent to document these references, as these bear witness to the fact that Premchand was influenced by Tagore.

As soon as *Gitanjali* won the Nobel, a number of its translations appeared. In addition to *Gitanjali*, other works by Tagore were also rendered into Urdu. Imtiaz Ali Taj was an accomplished playwright who also ran a publishing house. Prem Chand, in a letter to Imtiaz Ali Taj dated 14 July 1919 enquires:

Which of the works of Tagore will be published by you?
The July issue of *Zamana* will carry an interesting article on Tagore. It might interest you. (p. 82)

Premchand wanted to know how many articles, creative pieces of Tagore appeared in the *Modern Review*, and he sought the

help of Munsî Dayal Narain Nigam, the editor of *Zamana* in a letter of 27 September 1919:

How many articles and works of Rabindra Babu appeared in *Modern Review*? They were all later published by Macmillan. (p. 88)

Tagore's name appears in another letter addressed to Daya Narain Nigam dated 3 January 1921:

Syed Abdul Majid's article goes well with (November) ... though it drew heavily on Rabindra Babu, but it gives the impression of originality (p. 133).

Premchand's stories revolve around women who relentlessly toil for the betterment of their families, but whose painstaking efforts hardly get recognition. Budhiya, the heroine of the story 'Kafan', is a testament to the fact. The sympathetic portrayal of women apart, Premchand quite surprisingly denounces every manifestation of feminism in his letters and, on that count, he does not hesitate to denounce Tagore's poems. Premchand's aversion towards feminism is revealed in a letter addressed to Imtiyaz Ali Taj. The letter of 14 September 1920 says:

I want to see literature as a masculine entity. I do not like feminism no matter in which shape it appears. It is the reason that I treat many poems of Tagore with distaste. It is my natural failing, what should I do. (p. 116)

Tagore got a rousing reception in Japan, and it prompted Premchand to assert that Japan has not lost interest in the affairs of India. In a letter dated 3 September 1929 Premchand wrote to Kesav Ram Sabherwal:

Tagore's grand reception in Japan made everyone realize that Japan has not lost all its interest in India, but it is regrettable there is hardly any example of Japan's interest. (p. 187)

Mentioning the names of writers who had left an indelible

mark on him, Premchand writes to the Hindi author Banarsi Das Chaturvedi on 3 June 1930:

I have not been influenced by any particular writer. I owed much to Pandit Ratan Nath Lucknawi and not infrequently influenced by Doctor Rabindranath Tagore. (p. 203).

Premchand held Tagore's writing in high esteem. As he wrote to Upendra Nath Ashk on 23 March 1932: 'Tagore's literary and philosophical articles are of high quality' (p. 237). Tagore is alluded to for the last time in his letter of 10 August 1932, addressed to Jainendra Kumar, a famous Hindi writer: 'Recently *Shorosi* [*sic*] and other books of Tagore have appeared' (p. 241). In a letter addressed to Inder Nath Madan, Premchand explicitly disclosed that he consciously adopted the style of Tagore. In his letter of 26 December 1934, he observes:

Of course Tolstoy, Victor Hugo and Roman Rolland have left their mark on me. With regard to short stories Tagore irradiated my path at the beginning and later on I developed my style. (p. 332)

In 1930, Premchand was invited to Santiniketan. But he could not make the trip as he received the invitation at the last minute. He explained the reason of not visiting Santiniketan in his letter dated 18 March 1936 to Banarsi Das Chaturvedi (p. 376).

Since Premchand alluded to the texts of Tagore at least 12 times in his letters and took pride in emulating Tagore's style, one can assume a certain degree of influence. Discussing the influence of Tagore on Premchand, a noted Marxist critic, Ehtisham Husain in his essay 'Impact of Tagore on Urdu Literature' observes:

Premchand's villages, innocent villagers, the distinct traits of their personality, the unified impression in the short structure of the story, all recall Tagore's short stories. There was hardly any significant tradition of short story prior to Premchand, and it was quite possible Premchand would have inclined to

purposeless romantic story writing had there not been the fully alive characters of Tagore before him.²

Delineating similarities between Tagore and Premchand, Abuzar Hashmi, a prominent Urdu critic, asserts:

It is most likely that Prem Chand learnt simplicity, lucidity of narration and depiction of reality from Tagore. Prem Chand also rendered two of Tagore's novels into Urdu.³

Some other critics and biographers of Tagore and Premchand point out that both possessed a strong sense of narrative. Taking a cue from Tagore, Premchand depicted the inherent traits of the upper caste with immense sensitivity. Tagore and Premchand wrote of the subaltern caught in the crossfire of alien rule and repressive social customs. At times, the thematic similarity between their writings perplexes the reader. If Tagore talks of a tehsildar of cotton tax in 'Kshudita Pashan', then Premchand lays bare the hypocrisies and pettiness of Alopī Deen, in *Namak ka Darogha*. According to Mohd. Tahir Ali, Premchand's early stories are derived from Tagore's.⁴ He even borrowed plots, and Tagore's story 'Mastermashay' and Premchand's 'Captain' are evidence of such indebtedness.

Besides Premchand, another noted Urdu poet Josh Malihabadi, whose sensuous verse coupled with revolutionary zeal blazed a new trail in Urdu poetry, had similarities with Tagore. Josh Malihabadi spent six months in Santiniketan at the invitation of Tagore. Josh provided a graphic account of his first encounter with the poet, and his subsequent stay at the institution for six months, in his widely acclaimed autobiography *Yaadon ki Barat*. It is a terse and compelling account that provides interesting literary insights. With affection, admiration and adulation on the one hand and hostility on the other, Josh writes:

When I returned to Lucknow from Ajmer, I noticed exhilaration all round about Tagore's arrival. I went there to meet him. Looking at me carefully he asked me in English,

'Is it true that I am looking at the face of a young poet?' I replied with bowed head, 'Probably yes.' He asked my name. I gave him my *nom-de-plume*. He shook hands with me and said, 'It was a strange surprise that Sarojini Naidu recited the translation of your poem 'The Dawn' yesterday and I should meet you today. Your poem is unmatched and after listening to it I can describe you as the son of the dawn.' After that, he told me that his father was a great scholar of Persian and the collection of Hafiz was found at his bedside. When I was leaving, he asked me, 'Is it possible for you to stay at Santiniketan with me for some time and explain the nuances of Hafiz's poetry so that I could acquaint myself with the spirit of his poetry?' I readily accepted his invitation. I reached there with my servant Jugnu and a number of books. Tagore gave me a rousing welcome...

Life at Santiniketan was very simple and the consumption of meat was prohibited. It did cause inconvenience but Jugnu would arrange meat for me furtively. Recreation in the morning, bath twice a day, music in the morning and evening, and teaching under the shadow of thick trees, were intrinsic part of Santiniketan.

...though I was moving slowly away from him after rescinding mysticism, still Tagore's poetry greatly impressed me. The translations of his verse would cast a spell on me. Occasionally I am still carried away by the mystical lines. The only reason is that a poet can never be prosaic and an impolite philosopher. Had I been a Bengali I would have understood Tagore the way he ought to be understood. I deeply regret that I read his poetry in its English translations and I could not understand him like Bengalis.⁵

Turning his attention to Tagore's personality Josh Malihabadi observes:

Being not conversant with the Bengali, I could not make a

comprehensive assessment of his poetry as critic. Similarly, I could not give an absolute opinion about his personality ... And I had spent only six months with him, what could I say about him only after six months? The only thing I could say is that he is truly cosmopolitan, high spirited, extremely gentle, sensitive, free of pretence, and an admirer of beauty.⁶

Josh's depiction reveals Tagore's virtuosity, but he also discerns a trait in him that is at odds with his affable personality. Josh found the exhibitionist attitude of Tagore repugnant:

He had something in his mental make-up that always annoyed me. It was his penchant for publicity which viewed with dislike. Whenever a foreigner came for an interview, he would sit at a prominent place after getting himself fully spruced up. Ambergris would light up behind him. Fully surrounded by beautiful girls he gave the interview in such a manner that the interviewer derived the impression that he or she was speaking to a mysterious divinity.⁷

This trenchant observation combines wit and sobriety, and provides a telling insight into a side of Tagore.

Professor Mohammad Hasan, Professor Ehtisham Husain, Professor M. Ziauddin and a number of other writers have discussed similarities between Tagore and Josh. The quest for beauty and love is the common strand that runs through the poetry of Tagore and Josh. A noted Urdu scholar Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi reviewed Josh's book *Rooh-e-Adab* in 1921, and declared that Josh's prose segments drew its sustenance from Tagore.

Not much has been written on how the eminent contemporaries Iqbal and Tagore influenced each other. Some scholars did find parallels. For Abuzar Hashmi, Iqbal's poetry has a close thematic affinity with Tagore's. Both Tagore and Iqbal were enamoured of the beauty of nature, both were avowed enemies of inertia, and both loved their countries. Hashmi draws a parallel between Tagore's 'Balaka' and Iqbal's 'Shaheen' (Eagle), where the

motif of the bird is used to express an understanding of the sources of vitality and a concern for humanity.⁸

Abuzar Hashmi definitely has a point. It is known that Tagore was aware of Iqbal and his poetry. Quoting Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, Santiranjan Bhattacharya in his Urdu book on the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore pointed out that Tagore visited Lahore in 1934 and went to Iqbal's house. But Iqbal was away from Lahore. Tagore praised Iqbal's poetry in his letter to Abbas Ali Khan Lama Hyderabad. Tagore writes:

Not being conversant with the languages in which Iqbal wrote I could not understand the depth of his creativity and I could hardly dare to express my opinion about his poetry. Iqbal's popularity prompts me to believe that his couplets are jewels that have the effulgence of the eternity...⁹

Tagore composed a poem on Iqbal after the latter died in 1936.

Another scholar and prose writer Maulana Abul Kalam, whose euphuistic prose opened new vistas for Urdu writers, was deeply influenced by the grandiloquent element in Tagore. Maulana Azad saw him in 1936, and in his preface to the translation of *Gitanjali* by Abdul Aziz Khalid he gives a gripping account of this brief meeting. According to Azad, he saw Tagore for the first time in 1936 when he was entering the Kala Bhavan and was assisted by Anil Chanda and Nandalal Basu. Tagore was on a wheelchair, but his frail body seemed vibrant and cheerful. Tagore would cast a long look at every painting and he would now and then be deeply moved by one. He said:

It is unfortunate that no time is left for me. I have to do a lot but I can hardly see. My hands have become useless, how could I find sensitivity of fingers. There is no elasticity left in my body, I have lost everything. If I get some more time, I will complete more work.¹⁰

In his journalistic and literary writings, and even in his widely acclaimed letters, Maulana Azad deliberately employed pleonastic but the equally perceptive style of Tagore. Akbar Allahabadi who employed wit, humour, irony and satire with remarkable creative flair, and whose couplets are still recited, was an admirer of Tagore. Niyaz Fatehpuri, who has the credit of translating *Gitanjali* in Urdu for the first time, recounts an interesting anecdote:

One day I was sitting near Akbar Allahabadi with the English translation of *Gitanjali*. Looking at it Akbar said if music is translated into poetry and it can express feelings then it will take the shape of Tagore's poetry.¹¹

The back cover of the book carried Tagore's photograph, which prompted Akbar to think of the visible portrayal of the rag *khamaj*.

The first translation of *Gitanjali* appeared in Urdu in 1914. Neyaz Fatehpuri, famous editor of the literary journal *Nigar*, rendered it into Urdu with the help of the English translation. *Gitanjali's* purple style fired the imagination of many Urdu poets and prose writers. *Gitanjali* was frequently rendered into Urdu and Abdul Aziz Khalid, Nirmal Chander and Syed Zaheer Abbas were other translators. Josh Malihabadi and Munawwar Lucknawi also rendered some poems of *Gitanjali* into Urdu. M. Ziyauddin translated the poems of Tagore directly from the Bengali, and it is the only direct and authentic translation. Firaq Gorakhpuri translated one hundred one poems of Tagore into Urdu, and it was published by the Sahitya Akademi. Majaz rendered *The Gardener* into Urdu, and Malik Ram translated it in 1944 and brought it out from Pustak Bhandar, Amritsar. Many poets well versed in Urdu and Bengali translated Tagore's poetry. They are Parvez Shahidi, Salik Lucknawi, Ezaz Afzal, Qaiser Shameem, Ain Rasheed, Mushtaque Anjum and others.

The translations of Tagore have sustained to two literary movements in Urdu. Romanticism in Urdu owed much to Tagore

and it engendered a new genre *Adab-e-Lateef* or light literature. Tagore directly influenced Sajjad Haider Yaldram, Iqbal Ahmad Akbarabadi, Majnoo Gorakhpuri, Mehdi Afadi, Neyaz Fatehpuri, Mulla Ramozi and the like. Free verse came into existence in Urdu owing to Tagore's influence.

The progressive movement committed to the Marxist ideology was set in motion in 1936. The progressive writers fulminated against Romanticism and maudlin notions of love, and looked up to senior writers. Premchand and Tagore did not disappoint them and they expressed their solidarity with them. Premchand delivered the presidential address at its first conference and Tagore sent a message to the progressive writers at its conference held in Allahabad in 1937. In his message, Tagore asked writers to get closer to people if they wanted to understand them:

They cannot do their work if they remain aloof as I did. Having been given the cold shoulder to people for a long period, I committed a blunder. Now I realized it and that is why I am exhorting you. My conscience impels me to love humanity and society. If literature is not alive to humanity it will never attain any success.¹²

The concept of emancipation of human beings and unflinching commitment to human concerns are the marked features of Tagore's poetry. But Urdu poets perceived him as a poet who excels in creating a multitude of emotional effects. This erroneous but widely held view about Tagore prompted progressive poets to turn to Nazrul's revolutionary poetry instead.

Hamidullah Afsar and Parvez Shahidi, two famous progressive poets, brought in the falcon imagery of Tagore frequently in their poetry. Parvez Shahidi wrote a poem 'Imprisoned Songs' on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of Tagore, and Hamidullah Afsar translated *Sisu* into Urdu. For him, if one has a collection of Hafiz's poems in one hand and *Gitanjali* in the other, then he is the richest person on earth.

Tagore's stress on nuanced narration and the interiority of the experience did not go down well with the writers committed to modern sensibility, but Tagore's fiction continued to inspire novelists. Many novels, plays and short story collections of Tagore appeared in Urdu. *Gora* and 'Kabuliwala' has widespread currency in Urdu and a modern writer of short fiction Anwar Qamar wrote his short story titled 'Kabuliwala Ki Wapsi' based on Tagore's 'Kabuliwala'. The story was written in the backdrop of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. His story begins where Tagore's hero completes his journey. It is perhaps an instance fiction grafted upon fiction, a hallmark of postmodern writing.

Much ink has also been expended on Tagore's biography and work. Many literary journals such as *Aajkal*, *Rooh-e-Adab*, *Naya Daur* and *Maghribi Bengal* have brought out special issues on Tagore. Scores of books such as *Aalmi Shair Guru Dev Doctor Rabindra Thakur ki Jeevan* by M. Abdus Salam Zaki (1961), *Rabindra Tagore* by Ehsan BA, *Tagore* by Nadim Seetapuri (1961), *Iqbal, Tagore and Nazrul* by Santiranjana Bhattacharya and *Rabindranath Tagore: Hayat wa Khidmat* by Santiranjana Bhattacharya have appeared in Urdu. Such instances bear out the fact that Tagore's creative output remains a continued source of inspiration for Urdu writers, scholars and readers.

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